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Gender, Global Economic Development and Intimate Lives: Exploring Reproductive Dilemmas in Metro Manila and Cavite, Philippines

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Thesis Abstract

The Reproductive Health debate has been intensely divisive in the dominantly Roman Catholic Philippines, as both opponents and supporters of “The Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012” (commonly referred to as the “RH Law”) have been at political and religious odds with each other for more than a decade. The debate has been framed in binaries (e.g. “anti” RH versus “pro” RH) in public discourse and in political campaigns related to the legislation and its mandates. Scholarship on the debate and the RH Law in the Philippine context has largely been focused on the historical and sociological factors surrounding the obstruction of the law, with considerable focus on the politically influential Catholic Church and how it has hindered the passing of the law for years.

I divert from existing scholarship by offering ethnographic case studies and qualitative data on reproductive *dilemmas*—which are oftentimes unresolved and fraught with hesitations and affect. From a feminist standpoint, I analyse how these dilemmas break away from the binary categories used in public discourse. Furthermore, I argue that the study of these dilemmas must be explored by looking at the ways in which global economic development policies—especially labour migration, remittances, and urban development—have drastically reconfigured intimate life in the Philippines over the last four decades. The narratives of locals in Metro Manila and Cavite show that such reproductive dilemmas are not only shaped by religious teachings and family planning needs, they are also complicated by the after-effects of the global. Finally, I discuss how gender dynamics also impact and create tensions in reproductive dilemmas, including traditional expectations of men and women in these globalising urban and suburban locales.

Using the theoretical rubric of “intimacy” (Pratt and Rosner 2012; Wilson 2012) and “intimate economies” (Wilson 2004), I explore the dialogue between the intimate relations and reproductive choices of Filipinos with the material conditions of their globalising social and physical environments. My thesis ultimately explores the intersections of gender, intimacies, and the globalised economy, and how they collide in the personal experiences of reproduction in Cavite and Metro Manila.

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Introduction

Through the study of gender and intimacy in the Philippines, it is easy to point out what many in the Western world consider to be *contradictions* of women's liberation in the Southeast Asian archipelago. Gender and feminist scholars, for instance, have explored how thousands of Filipino women send remittances back to the Philippines as they work overseas (Rodriguez 2002; Tyner 2004; Parreñas 2007; Aguilar Jr. 2014), usually in the domestic settings and homes of privileged families, underpaid, de-professionalised and “dislocated” (Parreñas 2001b).¹ This particular issue has also been taken up by scholars in my home country, Canada, since the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP) has played a key role in facilitating the migration of Filipino women to Canadian soil as a way to remedy the need for domestic helpers and caregivers to families and the elderly (see for instance Stasiulis and Bakan 1997; Gibson et al. 2001; Pratt 2005). Filipino women working as domestic helpers in more developed economies such as Canada, the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, Japan, and the Middle East are given opportunities for international employment and financial prospects, but are vulnerable to gendered and racial exploitation in the process. On the other hand, despite having had two female presidents (Corazon Aquino and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo), the Philippines still does not recognise divorce and disallows the legal right for Filipino women to leave their husbands if they choose to do so (Constable 2003).

Another glaring contradiction in gender equality and women's rights in the Philippines is the fact that a reproductive health law was passed only in 2012, during the second year of my

¹In *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration and Domestic Work* (2001), Parreñas refers to the terms “dislocation” as well as “contradictory class mobility” to describe the discrepancy between education, skills and training and the overseas employment of Filipino migrants performing domestic work in Rome, Italy and Los Angeles, United States.

doctoral studies and while I was conducting fieldwork in Metro Manila. In so many ways, Filipino women are visible and successful in politics, education, activism, business, and healthcare industries, but there concurrently exist state-imposed obstructions on their personal lives. Such intimate aspects of their private lives cannot entirely be dictated on their own terms without the interferences of larger structures of power and ideology. Ideals of motherhood and marriage are still prevalent in Filipino culture and society, and such ideals have impacted on legislation and the public provision of reproductive and family planning services to Filipinos. Gender equality and dynamics in the Philippines oftentimes do not *make sense* to feminist scholars working in Western contexts.

But the anomalies, the apparent falseness of progress in gender equality and women's rights in the Philippines seem so easy to pick apart and highlight, especially during conversations occurring at a vast distance. My critical interest in reproduction and intimacy in the Philippines developed by looking at the two related topics and at the country as an *outsider-within* (Gueverra 2006), as someone who grew up outside of the Philippines but still had some claim to its culture and ethnic histories. But, by also looking inwardly at my own situation, it became evident that anomalies of gender dynamics and expectations do not just exist *elsewhere*, but also subsist in my context. As a Filipino-Canadian, for instance, I am afforded easy access to modern methods of contraception. Marriage is an option for Canadians, as there is also the possibility of becoming part of a *common law* union, so that we can have the same civil rights of those in legal marriages. Because of these social and legal freedoms, then, motherhood and marriage are not always social *expectations* in the Canadian context. And so, for my own personal reasons—which includes the desire to have the time and space to be able to write this thesis at a research institution in the United Kingdom—I chose to postpone having children and also have no

yearning to get married or have a wedding. Having been born and raised in Canada (by Filipino immigrant parents), these options have always been within my own reach.

Cultural and societal values, however, including ideas about women's reproductive roles, also travel and are carried along by their mediators in the diaspora. Relatives and friends, who share the same cultural values as many in the Philippines, do not all view my choices as socially acceptable or appropriate. And although few have given up on the topic of my *non-desires* to have children or a wedding, the repetitive inquiries about my personal choices and the enunciated opinions on my life decisions will likely continue for a number of years.

These are not at all systemic restrictions to my access to reproductive services. Such views and expressions will not change my decision to postpone having children or to reject the idea of marriage. Nonetheless, the interactions I have with these individuals in my personal circles and moments, and the many conversation I have had that focus on my *non-desires*, play a role in my own internal conflicts about my intimate choices. Certainly, the legal and structural allowances regarding marriage and family planning do not guarantee that *dilemmas* on these important life decisions will be non-existent. They do not ensure that individuals in certain contexts where gender equality is supposed to *make sense* do not also have to negotiate with other factors. Dilemmas on reproduction and intimacy are produced and molded by a variety of factors—sexual orientation, class, gender, race, and socio-economic background are important to note, for instance. But it is also necessary to consider desires and *non-desires*, personal relationships, cultural and family values, political views, and life experiences as well. Indeed, reproductive dilemmas, in particular, are complex. They are also changeable over time and place, and almost always beset with a muddled range of emotions.

I am unsettled even, during discussions about abortion rights with other feminist colleagues. This is not because I disagree with them entirely, but rather because of my own anxieties and discomfort around the common narratives of *terminating pregnancies* after screenings for “abnormalities” such as Down’s Syndrome. As someone with a sibling with Down’s Syndrome, I cringe at the fact that the option of termination is so readily available even if I agree that it is *the right of the mother* to choose this option. Indeed, feminists have fought for decades (and continue to fight) for the right to have individual authority over their bodies, including how they procreate and how they practice sex and sexuality. This is a view that I politically support. Regardless, my personal life experiences and circumstances complicate my own feelings about abortion and have made me critical towards the notion of “abnormal” pregnancies. My personal dilemmas also travel with me, as I traverse borders and live in different cities. Conversations and curiosities about my desires and *non-desires* are never really left home in Canada, and even in the Philippines I found myself repeatedly explaining my choices pertaining to reproduction and intimate lives.

Ideas and experiences with reproduction are not without their chaotic emotions, regardless of the context in which they exist. In many cases they are intricate and untidy, despite state-given freedoms and accesses to reproductive rights or, on the other hand, systemic constraints that barricade them. Thus, I explore the concept of reproductive dilemmas in Metro Manila and Cavite—including personal and political views on reproduction, experiences related to family planning, and dramas of intimacies—knowing, nevertheless, how difficult they are to fully *capture*, and to define. Dilemmas related to reproduction and intimacy in Metro Manila and Cavite are dependent upon numerous factors as they are in other parts of the globe. They depend on individual experiences, of personal mediations with cultural and societal values, faith,

and varied circumstances. But I attempt here to at least locate larger themes and processes that add nuance to dilemmas. In both Metro Manila and Cavite, politico-historical trajectories, state powers, discourses on gender, and different (but related) after-effects of economic processes interact to create the conditions in which reproductive dilemmas are formed. And they interact in a context that has also witnessed loud and impassioned political and religious debates surrounding legislation on reproductive health and family planning that finally drew to a close after more than thirteen years.

Thus, my research project is an exploration of how personal lives and reproductive decisions are shaped by prevailing gender dynamics and the effects of global economic policies, *in addition to* faith and reactions to reproductive health debates. It is an exploration of how aspects of the intimate interact with those of the global. But also, it is an investigation of how people make personal choices about reproduction and intimacy in the urban spaces of Metro Manila and in the rural/suburban landscapes surrounding it.

Chapter 1: The RH Debate, Reproductive Dilemmas, and the “Global”

In 1987, it was officially written in the Philippine Constitution that the state “shall equally protect the life of the mother and the life of the unborn from conception” (Article 2, Section 12). The declaration reflects the nation’s commitment to its strong Roman Catholic values including the belief that life begins at the moment of conception. Realised through social, educational and health policies, this constitutional belief in the protection of the “unborn” has also led to the absence of sexual education in schools, the criminalisation of abortion, and the

uneven distribution of contraceptive resources for Filipino men and women.² Fully implicated at the core of these policies are Filipino women (especially poor women), who continue to endure the consequences of not having universal access to safe abortions (or substantial care for post-abortion procedures), birth control, or even non-judgmental sexual information at community health centres. The Center for Reproductive Rights has even found that “despite the criminal ban [of abortions], in 2008 alone, an estimated 560,000 induced abortions took place in the Philippines; 90,000 women sought treatment for complications and 1,000 women died” (2010, p. 13).

In response to the negative effects of these policies on Filipino women (as well as high population and unemployment rates), the Philippine government under President Benigno Aquino passed “The Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012” into law in December 2012. It is commonly referred to as the “RH Law”. In Section 2 of the legislation, it is written that the state shall provide:

...universal access to medically-safe, non-abortifacient, effective, legal, affordable, and quality reproductive health care services, methods, devices, supplies which do not prevent the implantation of a fertilized ovum as determined by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and relevant information and education thereon according to the priority needs of women, children and other underprivileged sectors...

(Republic Act No. 10354, Section 2, d)

² In 2000, for instance, Executive Order 003 was issued by Manila Mayor Jose “Lito” Atienza, and instructs city officials to “uphold natural family planning... [and] discourage the use of artificial methods of contraception like condoms, pills, intrauterine devices and other [methods].” (Centre for Reproductive Health 2008). This point re-emerges in Chapter 2, in an overview of the RH Law’s history in the Philippines.

As well, while the law does recognise that abortion in the state is “illegal and punishable by law”, it still claims that the government will “ensure that all women needing care for post-abortive complications and all other complications arising from pregnancy, labor and delivery and related issues shall be treated and counseled in a humane, nonjudgmental and compassionate manner in accordance with law and medical ethics” (Republic Act No. 10354, Section 3, j). In essence, the law intends to ameliorate the troubling consequences that many Filipino women have been experiencing due to the lack of contraceptives, maternal and post-abortion care, and other such reproductive health services in the country. These negative effects are numerous and are not restricted to physical complications from unsafe abortions or multiple pregnancies—they are psychological and emotional consequences, and include strained marital relationships that often lead to domestic abuse and violence if women refuse sex with their partners (Center for Reproductive Rights 2007, p. 54).

The Philippine Catholic Church has taken great measures to prevent the passing and implementation of reproductive health legislation. As a key civil institution that employs Roman Catholic teachings in its own political rhetoric, the Church has had a credible influence on government decision-making since its role in overthrowing the oppressive Marcos government in the mid 1980s.³ Filipino bishops for example, have appropriated Pope John Paul II’s term “culture of death”, and transformed the word “death” into an acronym representing divorce, euthanasia, abortion, trans-sexuality, and homosexuality—all which are considered to be moral “threats” to Filipino society.⁴ By challenging reproductive health legislation with a rhetorical tool inspired by the words of the previous Pope and the Vatican, the Philippine Church “is able

³ President Ferdinand Marcos extended his two-term limit by declaring martial law in 1972. His regime ordered the arrests of prominent opposition leaders and activists.

⁴ Pope John Paul II coined the term “culture of life” in his widely read encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* or “Gospel of Life” in 1995.

to declare that the campaign against [Republic Act No. 10354] is not merely one about sexual health and demography, but a general crusade against a broad spectrum of the moral tribulations of Filipino society” (Bautista 2010, p. 37).

In the Philippines, Roman Catholic and nationalist ideologies work connectedly in their interference with women’s reproductive and sexual practices. First introduced to the country by the Spaniards during the 16th and 17th centuries, Catholicism is considered to be the colonial product that unified the archipelago and helped to establish a homogeneous Filipino identity. Shirley (2006) argues that a common national identity had not existed prior to the arrival of Catholicism, and posits that the colonial introduction of the organised religion helped to construct a cohesive and unified Filipino identity (Shirley 2006, p. 5). Today, the Philippines has the largest Roman Catholic presence in Southeast Asia and Asia-Pacific (other dominantly Catholic states include East Timor and Papua New Guinea), with approximately 80.6% of the population self-identifying as Roman Catholic (Buenza 2015).

Furthermore, the traditional Filipino family is considered to be—even up until the present day—one of the most significant social strongholds of the country and an extension of Roman Catholic values. An example that also emphasises the linkages between Catholic values and state legislation in the Philippines, is the description of the family unit in the 1987 Family Code of the Philippines. In this document, a heterosexual companionship between a married husband and wife are heads of their own household, which are shared with their own kin:

Family relations include those:

- (1) Between husband and wife;
- (2) Between parents and children;
- (3) Among other ascendants and descendants; and

(3) Among brothers and sisters, whether of the full- or half-blood. (217a)

(Executive Order No. 209, Section 150)

The code further defines the family as an institution that must be *protected* and cherished by the state: “The family, being the foundation of the nation, is a basic social institution which public policy cherishes and protects. Consequently, family relations are governed by law and no custom, practice or agreement destructive of the family shall be recognized or given effect” (Executive Order No. 209, Section 149).

It is no wonder then, why the path towards passing and implementing a comprehensive law on reproductive health services has been fraught with challenges on multiple fronts. Accompanying the 1987 Philippine Constitution’s declaration to protect unborn children (thus, firmly criminalising abortion), the Family Code of 1987 envisions a particular social network that defines the family structure—one that is heterosexual, nuclear, and a fundamental and *foundational* component of the Filipino nation. Thus, when opponents of the RH Law express anxieties about the mandates of the RH Law including modern contraception and the possibilities of legalising abortion, they are expressing concerns about how these mandates threaten the traditional Filipino family and the Filipino *nation* as well. The law’s mandates represent moral and societal threats to the Filipino national identity that has been built upon a foundation of Roman Catholic values and traditions.

However, Curato and Ong (2014) have found that despite the high percentage of self-identifying Roman Catholics in the Philippines, a large number (68%) still supports the RH Law and expresses a need for more reproductive and family health services (p. 7). Yet, regardless of these incongruities presented by polls—which do suggest that even Catholic communities in the

Philippines are turning away from Church teachings in favour of modern reproductive services— religion as a whole still plays an important role in debates around reproduction, intimacies, and by extension, sexuality. In *Religion and Modern Society: Citizenship, Secularization and the State* (2011), Bryan Turner looks closer at religion's connection to the human body and its role in symbolically articulating social values and morals, stating that it has the “immediate capacity to express sacred values, human sexuality and social power” (p. 18). Thus, when religious discourse and state policies collaborate on the topic of reproductive rights, women must deal with the consequences of these decisions since their bodies (symbolic and physical) and reproductive functions are such important building blocks to the foundations of different religions. Turner further discusses this in his work:

Social struggles over the control of human reproduction have been reflected in controversies between matriarchy and patriarchy as forms of authority, and these political controversies can be discerned even in the historical origins of the tradition of a High God. The body has thus played a pivotal role in the Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Judaism and Islam) where notions of family, generation and reproduction dominated their core theology and cosmology. These religions were profoundly patriarchal, and hence sexuality, the sexual division of labour and the status of women were major considerations of religious practice and belief.

(2011, p. 21)

Thus, the Philippine Catholic Church and a large number of “pro life” Filipinos have been rejecting and actively opposing the RH Law for more than a decade, interpreting its policies as a means to encourage pre-marital sex, destroy the traditional family structure, and promote death (of the unborn foetus) rather than the sacredness of life. Shortly after its legislative passage for instance, these influential opposition groups, including the Catholic Bishop's Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) successfully lobbied the Supreme Court to halt the RH

Law on the grounds that it is unconstitutional, as it was argued that the law threatens the life of the unborn child by promoting to use of so-called abortifacients. The law was finally cleared by the Supreme Court and declared “constitutional” in April 2014, and its mandates have yet to be comprehensively and fully implemented across health and educational institutions at all levels of government.⁵

Scholarship on Reproductive Politics and the RH Law Debate

Women’s Bodies, Nationalism, and State Powers

Reproductive politics in the Philippines (at the macro and micro levels) require a feminist analytical framework for a multitude of reasons. Here, I use the term *macro* to refer to politics and processes at the state level, including the legislative trajectories and high-level discussions about the RH Law; I use *micro* to refer to individuals’ personal politics, views, or experiences with reproduction, intimacies, and family planning. But such a battle against (and for) reproductive rights between large religious institutions, the state, and the needs of its citizens is of course not unique to the Philippines. Numerous countries, both in the Western world and regions in the Global South (including Latin America, Christian countries in Africa, and other parts of Asia and the Middle East) have in the past or continue to deal with political and religious struggles concerning women’s legal access to safe abortions, contraception, and maternal health. Since women’s sexual and reproductive roles are so crucial to the social and moral orders outlined in major religions (and therefore are almost always central to patriarchal ideals and operations) political struggles related to reproduction and reproductive health are an international

⁵ Not all of the provisions of the RH Law were deemed constitutional by the Supreme Court. Several provisions were rejected, and this will be further discussed in Chapter 2.

concern for women. These gendered struggles are ongoing and span the globe. Regardless of the region or historical moment, women are the most affected and negatively implicated when religious institutions, nationalist programmes, and systemic patriarchy come together to formulate policies and create restrictions on women's bodies.

The reproductive and sexual roles of women emerged as key political concerns for second wave liberal feminists in the West. In addition to seeking out equality in the workplace and re-defining their domestic roles in traditional households, feminists also brought attention to the ways in which women were socially and culturally valued only for their reproductive and maternal purposes. The bodies of women and issues related to their sexual and reproductive roles (including contraception, rape, sexual expression, motherhood, and abortion), therefore became substantial and major concerns for the "women's liberation" agenda, giving significance and concrete meaning to the influential notion that "the personal is political" (Hanish 1970). Thus, feminist politics from this particular moment raised important questions about the role of patriarchy in societal and biological expectations of women's roles as ideal mothers and wives, and their places within the confines of the "private" spaces of domesticity. The "personal" aspects of a woman's life were indeed "political" as women's sexual identities and reproductive roles were (and are still) reflective of a collective set of values and morals. They were also critical to maintaining specific family arrangements that were representative of larger society. For these reasons, state control and legislation (upheld by patriarchal ideology) have traditionally played a role in policing women's sexuality and reproduction, and continue to create material conditions and legislations that restrict women from having full control over their own bodies in both developed and developing regions of the world (Petchesky 1983; Correa and Petchesky 1994).

Patriarchy of course, is tied to other political and economic systems and ideologies that operate together in creating oppressions and restraints on how women conduct their own sexual behaviours and reproductive choices. Sylvia Walby's "Towards a Theory of Patriarchy" (1994) focuses specifically on the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism, and how these two interconnected systems create and sustain oppressions of women via state policies on labour and reproduction. She posits for instance, that patriarchal relations in the workplace, the state, and the traditional family unit are "central to the determination of the position of women in paid work", later arguing that the state is "a site of patriarchal relations which is necessary to patriarchy as a whole. The state represents patriarchal as well as capitalist interests and furthers them in its actions" (Walby 1994, p. 24). In arguing these points, Walby describes how women's domestic labour within the household is necessary in order to uphold capitalist systems (fueled by male labour), which explains why government policies have failed to adequately support or defend the legal rights of women in the workforce. Walby demonstrates with validity how patriarchy is an evolved system that has strategically created expected roles in reproduction, labour, and sexuality for women.

The symbol of the female body—especially her reproductive role and sexual behaviour—is also a site where the struggles of nationalist projects are played out. In *Gender & Nation* (1997), Nira Yuval-Davis, one of the leading feminist scholars to provide a comprehensive gender analysis of the myth of the "nation" and nationalist projects, explicitly states that "any discussions of women's reproductive rights which do not take into account the national dimension can be held to be seriously wanting" (p. 22). The discussion of women's reproductive "purposes" and the construction of the nation-state is essential in understanding the ways that women are incorporated and valued in their private and public spheres. This is because women

are seen as “mothers” of the nation responsible for producing and nurturing their countries’ future citizens. Yuval-Davis elaborates on the importance of these roles in nationalist struggles, and affirms that women are considered to be “the future of ‘the nation’”, as the legacy of the nation depends “almost exclusively on the reproductive powers of women who are called upon to have more children. The need for people—often primarily for men—can be for a variety of nationalist purposes, civil and military” (1997, p. 29).

Nationalist agendas have historically been problematic and contradictory to the status of women’s empowerment and emancipation, as also pointed out by Kandiyoti in “Identity and its Discontents: Women and the Nation” (1992). In her work, Kandiyoti looks at the nature of nationalist projects within the context of post-colonialist struggles. She states that although such efforts to re-claim national autonomy and independence from colonial powers invite and incorporate women in these struggles (e.g. military participation, presence in the labour sectors, etc.), these same women are only relegated back to their engendered private spheres once the state’s end goals have been reached.

On the one hand, nationalist movements invite women to participate more fully in collective life by interpolating them as “national” actors: mothers, educators, workers and even fighters. On the other hand, they reaffirm the boundaries of culturally acceptable feminine conduct and exert pressure on women to articulate their gender interests within the terms of reference set by nationalist discourse. Feminism is not autonomous, but bound to the signifying network of the national context which produces it.

(Kandiyoti 1992, p. 433)

Although the Philippines differs greatly from other nations based on its geographical location, its colonial past, its economic structure and political histories, it is helpful to briefly look at other examples of countries that have also witnessed conflicts between religious institutions and the fight for women's reproductive rights. Italy, Ireland and Poland have each experienced national tensions because of the lack of women's access to reproductive health and services (including legal abortion) and in each of these contexts the Roman Catholic Church has participated as a powerful opponent of reproductive rights. Each of these cases not only demonstrate institutionalised religion's long and continuous battle to deny modern sexual and reproductive rights to women, but also the component of nationalism and nation-building in these intricate conflicts.

In her work, "Abortion & Reproductive Rights Under Nationalist Regimes in Twentieth Century Europe" (2004), Patrizia Albanese explicates how under Mussolini's regime, throughout fascist rule in the 1930s and up until the 1970s, abortion was treated as a crime against the Italian population. The country was "pro-natalist" during these years and required women to continue reproducing citizens of the Italian state: "Clearly, under fascist rule, and in keeping with nationalist pro-natalist sentiments, women's reproductive rights were sacrificed for the 'greater good of the nation'" (Albanese 2004, p. 17). Albanese claims as well that the Catholic Church and Catholic political parties sought to maintain these policies throughout the 1950s and 1960s, similar to the experience of the Philippines in contemporary times. She makes it clear though, that it is the Church's involvement and participation in the nationalist agenda of Italy and not religion alone that caused or explained the restrictions against abortion. She specifically refers to the term "re-patriarchalization" to explain the workings of the nationalist projects of Italy and the processes of denying reproductive rights for women for the sake of the ideal nation: "Abortion

thus becomes treated like a crime against the nation and an attack on ‘national health’ (at the expense of women’s health)” (Albanese 2004, p. 29). Abortion became legal in Italy in 1978 but only for women within 90 days of the start of their pregnancies. There have been efforts in the early 1980s to repeal this law.

In Ireland—where there are also similarities with the nation-building narrative of the Philippines—Roman Catholicism became synonymous with the Irish national identity, especially after the country gained independence from England in 1921. Siobhan Mullaly (2005) states that the Roman Catholic identity and Irish national identity were able to amalgamate cohesively since so many Irish citizens were already followers of the religion and because there was such an immense push to define Ireland as “not England” (p. 82). And as soon as this process began, women’s rights—especially sexual and reproductive rights—were affected at the state level. Because the Irish nation was fully aligned with a Roman Catholic identity, it therefore assumed a “pro life” stance against the woman’s choice to abort:

In Ireland, the search for homogeneity and national unity transformed Irish republicanism into a "conservative ... Catholic nationalist movement." This transformation was to have a significant impact on women's citizenship...Women's reproductive autonomy was sacrificed to the greater good of a postcolonial political project, and women were defined not by their equal capacity for moral agency, but by their reproductive and sexual functions.

(Mullaly 2005, p. 83)

The right to abort in Ireland remains a contentious issue and is only legal if a pregnancy threatens the health of the carrying woman. Conservative Catholic groups continue to view feminist and human rights discourses on RH as threatening to both the traditional family structures in Ireland as well as to Irish “sovereignty” (Mullaly 2005, p. 83).

Another example that exhibits the Catholic Church or the Roman Catholic faith becoming a crucial part of nation building is the case of Poland. Hanna Jankowska (1993) writes: “what cannot be denied is the contribution of the Catholic Church to preserving the Polish national identity for long years when Poland had been occupied by three neighboring powers (1795-1918)” (p. 291). And similar to the Philippines during the Marcos regime, Poland also experienced martial law in the 1980s in which the Catholic Church asserted itself in the public arena as a “symbol of Polish independence” (Jankowska 1993, p. 291). The Catholic Church and expressions from a solidified Catholic-Polish collective identity helped to maintain the criminalisation of abortion (abortion was legally banned in 1932) and impeded efforts to legalise it and improve women’s reproductive care.

Italy, Ireland, and Poland are a few select examples of how the inter-relationship between the Catholic Church, nationalist agendas, and state intervention can hinder the implementation of reproductive services for citizens. And by referring to other contexts, it becomes evident that regardless of the region or historical moment, women are the most affected and negatively implicated when religious institutions, nationalist programmes, and processes of “re-patriarchalization” come together to formulate policies and create restrictions on women’s bodies. Feminist discussions on reproductive politics explore how the intertwined issues of nationalist and religious ideologies, and patriarchal economic systems are concerned with, or dependent upon women’s reproductive actions. Such analyses are especially relevant in the Philippine context, as public discourses on the RH Law and religious and state powers converge in ways that significantly affect the reproductive lives of Filipinos, and mostly harm the poorest women in Philippine communities.

Select scholars and activists rightfully look at the role of the Catholic Church and religious-political leadership in hindering reproductive health legislation in the country. Dr. Junice Demeterio-Melgar (2005), documents attitudes towards sexuality during her time as an active member of the Communist movement during the 1980s, and then later outlines the various obstacles in organising for reproductive health within a context significantly shaped by “Catholic politics” (p. 155). Demeterio-Melgar goes into historical detail about the beginnings of *Linangang Kababaihan*, Inc. (LIKHAAN), which she and Dr. Sylvia Estrada-Claudio co-founded as health activists during the post-Marcos period (mid 1990s). LIKHAAN continues to provide free community maternal health care, contraceptives, care for women who experience domestic violence, and family planning counselling to poor communities. Currently, LIKHAAN has clinics in six urban poor communities in Metro Manila, which serve approximately 30,000 patients annually (Morbis 2012). Demeterio-Melgar’s piece provides accounts of how the Church, religiously aligned presidential administrations, and fundamental Catholic groups have challenged the reproductive rights of Filipino women. But, she nonetheless remains hopeful and assured in the different women’s groups and civil society groups that work in tandem to address issues of access to reproductive health, stating that the “still evolving reproductive health movement is perhaps the most visible counter-movement to Catholic fundamentalist hegemony over sexual and reproductive issues today” (Demeterio-Melgar 2005, p. 163).

Carolina S. Ruiz-Austria (2004)’s “The Church, the State and Women's Bodies in the Context of Religious Fundamentalism in the Philippines”, provides a legal analysis of the scholarship, and looks specifically at how Roman Catholic ideas about women’s sexuality have

been solidified in Philippine family, civil, and penal law. Such ideas about women's bodies and sexuality (rooted in Canon law and "laws of Spanish origin") have only made it more difficult to pass and implement reproductive health legislation in the Philippine context. Ruiz-Austria writes during the time of Macapagal-Arroyo's rule as president (2001-2010), when both Macapagal-Arroyo and the Department of Health (DoH) Secretary at the time, Manuel Dayrit, were speaking out against modern family planning methods (2004, p. 99). Ruiz-Austria even documents how in 2003, the DoH signed over a P50 million grant in public funds for Couples for Christ (a "pro life" organization) to take over the government's natural family planning programming (2004, p. 99). Thus, similar to other scholars (Bautista 2010, Ocampo 2014, Parmanand 2014), the institutional relationship between religion and state leadership is emphasised as a key barrier to implementing a national RH law. But Ruiz-Austria adds a valuable contribution to the scholarship on the RH debate and RH law in the Philippines because her work also explores the links between the Philippines' legal system, colonial religious doctrine, and prevalent and long-standing religious ideologies and socio-cultural views about Filipino women's sexuality and its moral implications. It is a feminist analysis of the obstacles of the legislation, and highlights how women's *sexuality* and sexual rights are at stake when institutional and legal powers work together to oppress the corporeal rights of Filipino women.

Julius Bautista (2010) also provides details of the intricate and strategic ways in which the Church and the CBCP have opposed the RH Law over the years prior to its passing, but gives special attention to the significance of the term "culture of death" and how it has been employed in these "anti RH" campaigns. Bautista finds, however, that despite the heated religious and political context in which the RH Bill was still in the process of becoming law, individuals were practicing sex and reproduction that directly clashed with the teachings of the Church and their

faith. He posits that his informants' decisions about sex and reproductive health (he explores for instance, how a young woman indulges in casual sex) "do not seem to be based primarily upon their faith as Roman Catholics" (Bautista 2010, p. 42). Such attitudes towards sex, reproduction, and faith are shared by some of my informants. My analysis does depart from Bautista's as I focus on aspects of the global and how they impact intimate lives.

Sharmila Parmanand (2014) and Jamir N. Ocampo (2014) consider other factors and how they intersect together within the portrait of the legislative trajectory of the RH Law. They explore different structural influences (e.g. changes in presidential leadership or international funding), international events, and several groups and actors that have played major roles in either fiercely supporting the legislation or actively barricading it from its passing. Parmanand (2014) provides a comprehensive discussion of the RH Law's legislative history, the debates surrounding the law, and also critiques the ways in which the Philippines has faced challenges in complying with the international conventions that "affirm its duty to safeguard reproductive rights" (p. 63). Parmanand's article offers a coherent contextual outline of the RH's Law's pathway to implementation, and weaves discussions on international frameworks on reproductive health, state and religious powers, and the work of reproductive rights advocacy groups in the Philippines as a way to provide a thorough understanding of the competing social and political forces at work and at odds (or in favour) of the RH Law's implementation.

Ocampo (2014) also maps out the several important "players" in the RH Law's history and extends his scope to also discuss factors such as President Aquino's administration being able to mobilise state and societal forces into ensuring that the legislative majority voted for the RH Bill (p. 135). He suggests that President Aquino's support for the legislation triggered "reform conjuncture" which played a significant part in the passing of the RH Law at that

specific moment (Ocampo 2014, p. 144). Hence, both authors bring together the “players” and forces that have formed the path towards the RH Law’s passing, but also its interruptions in successful implementation. Parmanand, specifically, writes from the period when the RH Law’s Implementation of Rules and Regulations (IRR) were still on hold by order of the Supreme Court, and looks at the “politics of the possible” in regards to the law’s promises to the Filipino public (2014, p. 76).

With politically influential Church officials continually rejecting the law and the shift in Catholic values that the RH Law’s passing represents, much of the public discourse on RH in the Philippines has been divisive, dichotomous, vitriolic and even exclusive, as scholars on the topic have recognised (Bautista 2009; Raffin and Cornelio 2009; Curato and Ong 2014). As a topic of interest to media and communications scholars, the actual RH *debate* and the role of new and television media have been analysed by scholars including David et al. (2014) and Curato and Ong (2014). David et al. (2014) explore the “framing strategies” of different groups (e.g. women’s rights groups, policy leaders on population management, “pro life” groups) and how they present the RH Law debate in media discourses using different language and terminology (p.1251). According to the authors, terms such as “reproductive health” and “responsible parenthood” would be employed in news media by these various groups in order to re-frame the population issue in a way that appealed to the shared political interests of their audiences, and as a way to inform the general public. Public discourses on the RH Law then, are shaped and influenced by several actors with competing interests and concerns regarding the RH Law, whether they support the legislation or reject it.

Curato and Ong (2014), interestingly, provide an extensive analysis of television programmes and on how the different types of programmes feature and include the voices of the

most vulnerable groups about reproductive health and needs. They find, for example, how poor mothers—the group most affected by the lack of reproductive health services—are highly represented in documentaries (36%), poorly represented in talk shows (6%), and entirely excluded in programmes that actually air debates on the RH Law (which at the time, was still the “RH Bill”) (p. 10).⁶ Thus, by featuring poor mothers mainly in documentaries and underrepresenting them in talk shows and public debates, television media plays a large role in excluding this group from the “parity of participation” required in critical and inclusive democratic processes. As a result, it leaves out poor women from media forums that involve actual dialogue (Curato and Ong 2014, p. 11). Public debates, in particular, would have provided significant opportunities for poor mothers to represent themselves as “political citizens who can challenge and be challenged by health experts, bishops, politicians, and feminists” (Curato and Ong 2014, p. 14).

Much of the scholarship on reproductive health and rights, the RH Law, and the RH debate in the Philippines, is also layered by policy-focused research conducted by women’s organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). As even Demeterio-Meglar (2005), Parmanand (2014) and Ocampo (2014) acknowledge, Filipino feminism and advocacy on reproductive health rights is in no way dormant or inactive. In fact, feminists in the Philippines have been effectively organising and advocating for women’s rights for several years. Again, Demeterio-Melgar and Estrada-Claudio of LIKHAAN have been active leaders in “pro RH” movements, and continue to advocate for women’s reproductive needs as activists, scholars, and health professionals. LIKHAAN has collaborated with other organisations such as the Center for Reproductive Rights and the Reproductive Health, Rights and Ethics Center for Studies and

⁶ Curato and Ong (2014) examined 22 television programmes aired by the Philippines’ 2 largest networks from 2011-2012 (p.10).

Training (ReproCen) in producing evidence-based reports highlighting the need of poor communities for reproductive health services. Such reports include, “Imposing Misery: The Impact of Manila’s Contraception Ban on Women and Families” (2007) and “Facts on Barriers to Contraceptive Use in the Philippines” (2010) which was conducted with the Guttmacher Institute.

Another important women’s organisation to mention is the General Assembly Binding Women for Reforms, Integrity, Equality, Leadership, and Action (GABRIELA). GABRIELA is one of the largest feminist coalitions in the Philippines and has been active since the 1980s during President Marcos’ dictatorship. The coalition has addressed issues of human rights, sex trafficking, violence against women, and censorship among other civil society and feminist concerns. But, while members of GABRIELA do advocate for women’s health rights, they depart from other feminist organisations in their weariness of the intentions behind the RH Law. Just a few months after its passing, GABRIELA’s Secretary General, Joms Salvador, proclaimed that the RH Law is not a *holistic* solution to the health rights of Filipino women, and that the law’s passing was propelled by “the interest and push of pharmaceuticals and businesses and by the Aquino government’s narrow objective of achieving the millennium development goals.” (GABRIELA: Alliance of Filipino Women 2013). Regardless of their departures in views about the RH Law, the work of both organisations are just a few examples of the large collective of women’s activism in the Philippines, which focus on local communities using bottom-up approaches, and have long histories of advocating for reproductive rights in the country.

Filipino Feminism and Religion

Returning to the discussion of institutionalised religion and religious conservative views, feminists have been widely critical of the role of religion—particularly Roman Catholicism—in obstructing the reproductive health rights of women in other contexts apart from the Philippines (Sjørup 1999; Ruether 2008). Sjørup (1999) explores how the Vatican’s discourses on contraception and abortion have impacted reproductive rights in Chile, although the larger focus of her piece critiques Samuel Huntington’s (1996) concept of the “clash of civilizations”, since Christianity (as a feature of Western civilization) thrives in non-Western regions and is a non-unified religion. Ruether (2008) is critical of Roman Catholicism’s “problem with women” (p.184), its teachings on family planning, sexuality, and abortion, and takes issue with how the religion’s influence has worsened reproductive health issues in Asia (including the Philippines), the Americas, and parts of Africa.

But religion is not dismissed entirely by feminists, even those in the Philippines who have been working in a context still entangled with Catholic traditions. It is argued that in some of the early women’s movements in Asia, religion has been an important tool in their feminist organising. In the historical project *Women’s Movements in Asia: Feminisms and Transnational Feminism*, Mina Roces (2010) further delineates how religious women were some of the first “leading feminist theoreticians” in Asia and continue to play a large role in advocating for women’s reproductive and sexual rights since they actually live with poor and indigenous communities, and are able to “immerse themselves in full-time activist work to ensure that the voices of the marginalized are heard” (p. 46). The Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), a transnational association that promotes “new models of theology for a religious pluralism” is also represented by a Filipino woman in its Executive Committee (Lilith Usog is Executive Secretary and Treasurer) (EATWOT 2012). EATWOT’s various chapters

work together in inter-faith dialogue and discuss how religious models must be re-visited in order to be transformed and compatible with the experiences of people from impoverished and disenfranchised contexts. A noteworthy organisation to also highlight is Catholics for RH, who work with communities of other Catholics and promote harmonious links between faith and the promotion of reproductive rights in the Philippines. I share the narratives of Bea, a representative of the organisation, later in the thesis.

Religion has been present in Filipino feminist advocacy (and women's movements in Asia in general) for a long period of time, indicating that even Filipino women have been finding ways to negotiate and destabilise patriarchal depictions of women that are rooted in their institutionalised faith. For Filipino women, the idealisation of their roles as devoted mothers and wives constructed by Roman Catholicism and the state is closely linked to the symbolism of the Virgin Mary. Similar to Mary, Filipino women are expected to obey their husbands and make sacrifices for their families, and so any sexual activity outside of the boundaries outlined by marriage is strongly frowned upon in the country as well as in other dominantly Catholic states.

Another reason as to why modern contraceptives are opposed by major religions including Roman Catholicism—and feminists have critiqued this—is the fact that they offer opportunities of sexual liberation to women. With the prevalence of modern contraceptives, sex would be conducted for *pleasure* rather than for reproductive purposes, and the traditional family unit would be weakened by such sexuality rather than strengthened by the desire to have more children. This of course, is why “anti RH” groups view the RH Law to be threatening to both the traditional family unit and to married unions (this will be further discussed in Chapter 2). However, according to Sr. Mary John Mananzan, an influential Missionary Benedictine sister

who founded the Women's Studies Program at St. Scholastica's College in Manila, these ideas of traditional feminine roles have already begun to be challenged by Filipino women:

The Christians among them have begun questioning the traditional teachings of the church especially those that justify the subordination of women. They are slowly gaining a clearer self-image and are experiencing a process of inner liberation from the abiding guilt feelings induced by religious doctrines and ethical teachings of the Catholic Church. The long-suffering doormat model of a 'goodwife' is no longer tenable. They are less and less inclined to pattern their life after the impossible model of virgin-mother or a domesticating Mary-cult imposed by foreign missionaries. They are questioning the interpretation of St. Paul's "wives obey your husbands" when it comes to the use of their body in the frequency of pregnancy or in submitting to their husbands every time he claims his marital rights.

(Mananzan 2004, p. 74)

Thus, as Mananzan also points out, religion is not entirely oppressive to women and local communities. Rather, its doctrines are re-defined, and its meanings mediated by faithful followers. Religion in many cases causes internal conflict when practiced alongside sexuality and the use of modern forms of contraceptives. Thus, for many—including informants whose narratives later emerge in the thesis—religion is still a present and profound force in their lives despite the ways their intimate and reproductive lives contradict and undermine Catholic teachings and values.

Transformations of Social Life and Globalised Intimacies

The scholarship and research outlined above effectively document the several forces at play in regards to how the RH Law transitioned from being a controversial bill to a (still) fiercely contested piece of legislation that positions a number of actors and organisations at odds with

one another. Without a doubt, the Church and CBCP are acknowledged by these scholars and activists as having a significant impact on the hindrance of women's reproductive health rights in the country. The RH debate, on the other hand, has also been investigated by media and communication scholars, specifically in relation to how it has been framed in public discourse and the roles that news and television media play in its construction to general audiences. As well, women's rights organisations and reproductive health activists are continually promoting, advocating for, and helping to provide reproductive services to the most vulnerable women and families from poor communities.

But my thesis diverts from the existing scholarship and moves towards an exploration of the intimate lives and reproductive experiences of Filipinos amidst the context of the RH Law having passed only a few years before. Bautista (2010) himself states that there is still much needed "wide-ranging and long term ethnographic research", on how Filipinos internally and individually make compromises between their faith and their needs for reproductive services (p. 39). My work at least provides a more in-depth glimpse and broader ethnographic portrait of how politics on the RH Law in the country shape Filipinos' personal experiences and predicaments with faith and reproduction—and how gender and the global are significant factors in these dilemmas as well.

Certainly, scholarly and theoretical analyses on reproductive politics in the Philippines call for further critique, including exploration from an interdisciplinary lens that also considers gender and economic globalisation. This is especially true in a context where the impassioned campaigns related to the RH Law include the use of binaries between *buhay* (life) and *patay* (death) to incite intense religious and emotional responses from local communities. Lost in the noise of these binary and heated debates, are the nuanced accounts and experiences that shape

reproductive choices, intimacies and personal experiences of ordinary Filipinos. As well, such “either/or” discourses and polemic discussions on reproduction simplistically assume that Filipinos choose to either agree or disagree with the RH Law based solely on their relationships with their faith and religiosity. These loud political discourses presented by groups who either oppose or support the legislation obscure the complexities of reproductive *dilemmas* and by extension, other forces that shape intimacies.

Scholarship and feminist activism in the Philippines (and about Filipino women) continue to challenge patriarchal systems that are connected to state legislation, nationalist projects, and religious ideologies, which all interlock as they influence and shape reproduction, intimacies and personal dilemmas. But similar to the rest of the world, the Philippines is dealing with profound and drastic changes caused by the organisation of the global economy, and its own economic development policies that are in dialogue with these markets. Indeed, scholars of the Philippines—whether from economic, historic, sociological, or feminist positions—have engaged with the robust and transformative ways that Filipinos have dispersed as labour migrants since state-sponsored labour export policies were implemented in the 1970s. Over 8 million Filipino migrants “traverse global spaces”, and reach more countries than any other national group in the world today (Bonifacio 2013, p. 211). Thus, in a state that has been so radically transformed by global migration and the consequences of economic development policies, an exploration of reproductive dilemmas must also include a discussion of how intimacies themselves have become *globalised*. Just as state and church politics have traditionally been known to restrict and dictate the reproductive actions of its women, the effects of the neoliberal economy also play a large part in how reproduction and intimacy are negotiated at the local level, even if they do so *indirectly*.

The Philippines in particular—with its large Catholic populations and numerous “pro life” groups who fight for the protection of traditional family structures (i.e. heterosexual unions and the sacredness of marriage)—has transformed considerably at the social level, especially since it commenced its labour export policies. Even the state-defined Filipino family has been reconfigured considerably since the implementation of labour export policies and widespread migration, in ways that undermine the now *imagined* traditional union. Aguilar (2014) expands on this point in his recent work on Filipino migration, which he describes as a “revolution”. He writes about the globalised compositions of Filipino families, rearranged by migration and characterised by transnational linkages: “Kinship practices have also been dramatically transformed and reconstituted in the age of global migration. The transnationalization of family life has been accepted and supported by kin and their local communities; with no stigma attached to geographically dispersed forms of the family, especially in migrant communities” (Aguilar 2014, p. 6)

The key observations that Aguilar provides in this analysis about transnational families and new “kinship practices” are that global migration has significantly impacted and redefined traditional configurations of Filipino families, and that these drastic changes are now also part of the mundane. This is the fascinating paradox of the Philippines and of Aguilar’s discussion of the migration “revolution”—the revolution has reorganised social, political, and economic life in the Philippines and the spatial and geographic dispersals of migration are seen and felt in everyday life. But even the ruptures of the everyday caused by the “revolution” of global migration have become intertwined with banality and normalcy. Certainly, the Philippines is a place where “almost everyone is connected to an OFW or immigrant, and many dream of following suit” (Bonifacio 2013, p. 211).

Reproductive dilemmas, intimacies, and reproductive politics then, necessitate critical analysis that extends beyond the local or national level, and that also considers economic globalisation within a theoretical framework. It requires a consideration of what is left of Aguilar's "revolution", and how those social and intimate effects are still continuously shifting. As the "personal" is "political" for women in various regions, the personal is also shaped by the *global* and the *economic* – its effects, its processes, and its material impacts.

Researching Reproductive Dilemmas and Intimacy: Looking at the "Global"

Indeed, the topic of reproduction warrants further critical and theoretical reflection, even if it is largely concerned with material consequences at the levels of health and population policy. Ginsburg and Rapp (1991) extend the policy and development-focused discussions surrounding reproduction, and broaden its scope to include both local and global institutions and processes—they thus frame reproduction as a set of *complex* politics. They outline how scholars and policy makers had become more aware and critical of the multiple ways in which "seemingly distant power relations shape local reproductive experiences" (Ginsburg and Rapp 1991, p. 313) and also emphasised the usefulness of using a "global lens" in critically analysing the different and interrelated powers (both global and local) that shape and determine reproductive policies and relations. Their description of a "global lens" looks at how reproduction encompasses concerns and relationships with larger structures of power and processes, which are so important to how both reproductive politics and dilemmas are shaped: "This 'global lens' focuses on the intersecting interests of states and other powerful institutions such as multinational and national corporations, international development agencies, Western

medicine, and religious groups as they construct the contexts within which local reproductive relations are played out” (Ginsburg and Rapp 1991, p. 312).

As discussed, at the core of reproductive politics are the issues and concerns related to women’s bodies – not only their corporeal functions of childrearing, but also the multiple ways in which their bodies operate as sites where political, religious, and national ideologies and interests are played out and contested. Thus, feminist activists continue to advocate for reproductive health as a women’s right in various regional contexts, and feminist scholars continue to explore reproduction and reproductive politics alongside the associated and related issues of motherhood, women’s sexuality, gender relations, intimacy, and traditional family structures, and how these issues are intertwined with larger societal concerns and ideologies, as well as systems of power.

Consequently, in the Philippine context, while religious politics and the influence of the CBCP have halted a comprehensive national RH legislation for so long and helped to shape the polarising public discourse about reproductive health and rights, it is important to also examine *global* processes that affect the reproductive lives of individuals as well as some of the feminist concerns on reproduction. This thesis therefore, looks at how some effects of global restructuring and certain economic policies—including the policies and processes of labour migration, remittances, and rapid and uneven urban development—directly and indirectly impact the reproductive dilemmas of Filipinos. I shift away from the notion that individual choices regarding reproductive health are determined largely by religio-cultural teachings (despite an immensely powerful and persuasive Catholic Church—this will be further discussed in Chapter 2). Interactions and exchanges with individuals in and around the globalising terrain of Metro Manila have instead, shown that these decisions, predicaments, opinions, and even rhetoric are

so deeply impacted by global market forces which have also been shaping the socio-cultural landscape of the Philippines and everyday life. Each narrative, story, and encounter offers insight on the factors and processes at work (macro and micro) and how they profoundly impact, formulate, and construct the social and intimate lives and reproductive choices of Filipinos. Their agency and limitations—regardless of their place in society—also reveal structures of gender, economics, and global processes of labour and monetary arrangements at play in the social spheres of their daily lives.

Although the term itself is complex and contentious, I use “the global” in this thesis to refer to select global economic development policies that the Philippines has implemented—labour migration and labour export policies, and urban development. The “global” is also always in dialogue with neoliberal ideologies, which guide economic markets and which have shaped global restructuring in the country (Lindio-McGovern 2007). Some of the after-effects of the global, which were only briefly introduced in this chapter, are also highlighted and further discussed in different sections of the thesis—as the labour migration of Filipinos has become widespread and prevalent, for instance, families and couples have become *transnational* and Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) contribute significantly to the economies by sending back remittances. Transnational families, relationships with OFWs, and remittances, therefore profoundly impact the reproductive and intimate lives of Filipinos in Metro Manila and Cavite.

Secondly, I look at how gender dynamics, spaces, and expectations (mostly of Filipino women’s roles as ideal wives and mothers) also shape reproductive experiences, dilemmas, and views. The gender expectations and social understandings of men and masculinity (or “machismo”) are also analysed in this thesis. How do decision-making, narratives, or experiences with reproduction highlight existing contradictions in systems or expectations of

gender roles? Gender dynamics—which are present in relationships, divisions of labour, spatialities—as well as gender expectations between men and women at the micro levels of households and intimate partnerships, play a large role in impacting reproductive dilemmas. Expectations of gender and how they interact with the processes of the global also affect and shape the intimate lives of Filipinos. This refers not only to how sexual intimacy is practiced but also to how ruptures and strains on intimacies can add more nuance and complication to reproductive dilemmas. Traditional or modern beliefs about men and women in the Philippines therefore interact with market forces in producing such dilemmas. Both processes complicate individual decisions or opinions on reproductive health, in ways that also complicate discourses on the binary politics of reproduction in the Philippines.

Additionally, I prioritise the term *dilemma* as a way to refer to a range of emotions, internal grappling, and mediation that occurs at the individual level. In speaking to my interlocutors, what became evident were how *affective* such personal decisions and politics on reproduction are in actuality. In several cases, individuals articulated their own struggles with making reproductive choices, which sometimes resulted in long-lasting feelings of regret, shame, guilt, and frustration. A woman who obtained an illegal abortion, for example, still feels remorse years later (Chapter 5); a woman who desires tubal ligation feels frustration towards her spouse who dissuaded her from obtaining one (Chapter 4); a woman who advocates for Pro-Life Philippines is haunted by stories of poor women who experience domestic violence if they refuse sex to their partners (Chapter 3). While the terms *choice* or *decision* can oftentimes indicate clear resolves to reproductive actions, *dilemma* better captures the *back and forth*, the *what ifs*, the *hesitancies*, ambiguities, and the *changeableness* of views on reproductive health reform, family planning methods and desires or *non-desires* to reproduce. In the Philippines, especially in

Metro Manila and Cavite where Catholic faith and hope for economic prosperity are prevalent amongst its diverse communities, reproductive dilemmas encompass emotional heaviness and internal conflicts that are at many times, unresolved and unforgotten.

The “Intimate Economies” of Reproductive Dilemmas in the Philippines

It is not the case that scholars and policy makers alike have not recognised that the Philippines’ reproductive health debate has elements or issues related to global forces, processes, or political relations. In fact, some arguments affiliated with the “anti RH” communities pertain to the problematic issue of the Philippines entertaining the “Western” idea of reproductive rights and attempting to apply it to the non-Western and (mostly) non-secular Philippine context (Parmanand 2014, p. 73). And in other sites, the effects of globalisation have produced new conditions and created new questions about women’s reproductive roles and purposes. Yuval-Davis (1997) also refers to globalisation’s impact on reproductive issues, but again with mention of how religious opposition creates additional strictures on women’s reproductive rights:

Processes of globalisation— economic, political and social— also create contradictory pressures on women's fertility. On the one hand, there is more pressure on women to go out to work, and often through international aid organizations there are more contraceptives available. On the other hand, rising ethnic and religious fundamentalist identity and political movements tighten control over women and increase opposition to any reproductive rights in the name of ‘custom and tradition’.

(p. 36)

In the Philippines, the most evident and tangible measure of globalisation is through a study of its labour migration policies and the socio-economic products of these policies. Again, this includes not only the monetary gains that the national economy is receiving through its remittance programmes, but also cultural and political constructions of the OFW and the prevalence of transnational families (immediate and extended families that are physically separated due to labour migration opportunities).

Secondly—and this is particularly noticeable within the borders of Metro Manila—is urban development, which is seen not only through the massive and impressive edifices (commercial, tourist, business, residential, etc.), but also through the hundreds of small communities who are being dismissed, displaced, and transferred to “squatter” areas and living as the metropolitan’s “informal settlers”. Thus, while globalisation encompasses so many different processes and works in such a complex fashion, my research specifically looks at labour migration, remittances, and urban development processes as having an impact on reproductive dilemmas, and which work under the direction of global, neoliberal restructuring.

While neoliberal frameworks shape economies across the globe, the Philippines remains an integral case study because of the deliberative policies that continue to compel its citizens to work abroad. This is a focal point that is referred to throughout the thesis, and is contextualised further in Chapter 2, which investigates how the Philippines fell into massive foreign debt (particularly during Ferdinand Marcos’ presidency) and initiated labour export strategies. The transformations in the country have been incredible. After four decades of facilitating and promoting its citizens towards overseas employment opportunities, the social and private lives of Filipinos have profoundly changed alongside their physical and economic landscapes. As a brief reminder, the institution of the Filipino family (which again, is to be protected by the state) has

drastically changed as parents (and even adult children) continue to leave the country in order to support their families and find financial success overseas.⁷ Essentially, global restructuring and its accompanying economic strategies have been changing the Philippines in even the most intimate spaces, and in ways that complicate the views of several groups who oppose the RH Law (this point is also further explored in Chapter 3). These economic and social transformations therefore, make it important to study local reproductive politics and dilemmas by also considering the country's relationship with global markets and with its own changing social spatialities. This of course, also applies to the study of reproduction in other geographical spaces. As Ginsburg and Rapp argue, "no discussion of contemporary state power can fail to note the intricate national and international connections among the rise of medical professions and industries, global markets in labor and pharmaceuticals, and ideologies and policies explicitly linking economic development to population control" (1991, p. 314).

The neoliberal, globalised Philippine landscape functions as the constant (but also ever-changing) analytical focal point and backdrop in the research, while its major and tangible economic processes are the main factors featured in the individual narratives and personal accounts. The reproductive dilemmas focused in each case study of this thesis are related to larger global processes, and their material impacts on intimate and private lives. This is the primary contribution of my research to existing scholarship on reproduction and reproductive health in the Philippines—I not only argue that reproductive *dilemmas* depict more complex experiences with reproduction than the binary debates about the RH Law suggest, I also posit that the *global* must be conjoined in an analysis of reproductive dilemmas. As scholarship on

⁷ It is important to note that the demographics of Filipino migrants and OFWs are socio-economically diverse, with many choosing to work overseas for their own personal desire and not necessarily from financial need. Filomeno Aguilar Jr. also points this out in *Migration Revolution* (2014): "...ordinary migrant workers essayed labour migration, and in the trails they blazed upper-class professionals from the Philippines have followed" (p. 5).

reproductive politics in the country has focused primarily on the ardent opposition of the CBCP and “pro life” groups against the RH Law, another stream of scholarship looks at the globalised social landscape of the Philippines, some of which have already been mentioned earlier (e.g. labour migration of Filipino women). These literatures come together in this analysis and framework.

Ara Wilson’s (2004) discussion of “intimate economies” then, offers valuable insight about the linkages between global economic processes and how the “intimate”, private lives of citizens are affected, shaped, and interact with these seemingly separate forces. While her ethnographic data is on the industrial, commercial, and cultural globalisation of Bangkok, Thailand, Wilson’s use of “intimate economies” is effectual in understanding how even the personal lives of Filipinos are altered by (and also alter in return and in correspondence with) the globalised organisation of the economy. In her astute introduction, Wilson acknowledges both cultural anthropology and the field of critical social theory in influencing the theoretical aims of “intimate economies”:

My approach is premised on the often-overshadowed notion that economic systems are not separate from intimate life, as orthodox conceptions of the economy suggest, but are inextricable from social relations and identities. According to cultural anthropology, economic systems incorporate social and cultural realms that are typically considered “private” and separate from the formal economy. Inversely, critical social theory suggests that social life is not separate from, but linked with, economic affairs. Just as intimate life (e.g., gender identities, sexual relationships, and ethnic ties) crosses into the public arena of markets and jobs, those public realms profoundly affect people’s private interactions and self-conceptions.

(2004, p.12)

If we are to apply this idea to the Philippine neoliberal and globalised economy—particularly the migrant labour and remittance economies—it can be argued that the intimate dynamics between spouses, partners, or between parents and their kin have indeed shaped the composition and direction of these multiple and interlacing economies. Earlier literature on the feminisation of the global migrant labour economy offers insight on how Filipino women had become desired commodities as nurses, nannies, domestic workers, and caretakers of the elderly. And the desire for their labour stems from culturally ingrained idealisations of Filipino women as mothers, nurturers, wives, and caregivers, which again have been influenced by Catholic values. These expectations and depictions of Filipino woman continue to circulate on a global scale and are effectively perpetuated by the receiving economies of the developed world (including the Middle East, Japan, Hong Kong, Europe, and Singapore) (Constable 1997; Parreñas 2000; Rodriguez 2008, Guevarra 2009). Such narratives and depictions of Filipino female identities helped to propel the Philippine labour and remittance economies in a gendered fashion—the country remains one of the major labour migration export zones in today’s globalised world. In this context, gendered subjectivities and personal roles (as *nurturers*)—which can be considered to be inclusive of intimate livelihoods—are in direct conversation with the flows of supply and demand generated by migrant labour and OFW economies.

More specific to the issue of reproduction, is the neoliberal argument that sizeable families with numerous children are advantageous and necessary to the economic success and growth of the country. A number of my respondents who oppose the RH Law had voiced this opinion, and argued that large families (and thus a high population of workers) fill the labour roles that are required both abroad and at home, as remittances would be sent back to the citizens who are left behind. While this view overlooks the more complex difficulties faced by

individuals who face violence, poverty, maternal mortality and other such complications amidst the lack of modern reproductive health options, it had already gained credibility as reports on a booming economy began to emerge in 2012.

In the first quarter of 2012, in particular, the Philippines was reported to have seen a 6.7% growth in their GDP while other economies including China witnessed a disappointing slump. In 2013, while I was still present in Metro Manila for field research, the financial growth was reported to be even higher than it was in 2012, with a 7.2% increase in the GDP (Rappler 2014). Thus, if a large population is argued to be critical to economic growth, then the role of Filipino women is not only to be caring and nurturing mothers, but also to *produce* multiple children in order to maintain this “surprisingly strong growth” (Ko 2012). Thus in certain ways, the economy of the Philippines is reliant not only upon the idea that Filipino women are model caretakers and nurturers, but on the reproductive actions of its men and women and the continuing socio-cultural legacy of large Filipino families.

Wilson’s “intimate economies” then, functions here as an analytical tool that shapes my theoretical framework for this research. Indeed, the complex gender dynamics in the Philippines and the effects of economic development policies are “linked with” the social affairs of reproduction and impact intimate life on a transnational scale (Wilson 2014, p. 12). But also, ideas of reproduction and how intimate life should be conducted—as they are similarly tied to religious and nationalist ideologies and state power—are also connected to promises of economic growth and prosperity in the “labour brokering” Philippines (Rodriguez 2002). I explore the reciprocal relationship between intimate life and economic development processes as I foreground narratives on reproductive dilemmas throughout the thesis.

Moreover, the use of “intimate economies” further establishes this thesis as a feminist project. Feminist and queer scholars continue to dismantle the boundaries between the personal and the political, the private and public, and also the local and global. The breakdown of dichotomies has been part of such scholarship for years, allowing deeper and more critical insight into the intricate details of everyday life and experiences. Such analyses have shown how the details of such “separate” categories such as the “global” and the “intimate” are in fact, blurred together and seep through the cracks of imagined definitive borders. As Pratt and Rosner (2012) claim, intimacy “does not solely reside in the private sphere; it is infused with worldliness. Nor is it purely personal: intimacy takes on specific political, social, and cultural meanings in different contexts” (p. 3). Although meanings of “intimacy” are “not fixed” and can seem “vague”, it is a useful analytical rubric that refers to an “open-ended array of relations” and helps to look at the *relational* links between the intimate and the global (Wilson 2012, p. 48).

By looking at both the *intimate* and the *global* in this project—specifically reproductive dilemmas, gender, and global economic processes—I also attempt to explore the instabilities between these categories, to locate the links between them, and explore how they *influence* each other and trespass each other’s territories. Hence, by thinking about reproductive dilemmas in the context of the globalising urban and suburban spaces of Metro Manila and Cavite using the analytic of the *intimate*, the rigid fault lines between the intimate and the global are further destabilised. As I demonstrate in this research, the network of gender dynamics and economic flows and its after-effects interact to produce a range of dilemmas when it comes to reproduction. And ideas about intimate life—reproduction, relationships, sex, and gender—are intertwined and guide economic strategies in the Philippines as well. This is especially relevant in a social,

cultural, and political landscape that has been fashioned by multiple colonial histories, in which Catholic values and economic prosperity are both pursued and sustained in vibrancy.

Studying and exploring intimate lives and experiences with reproduction, however, call for feminist methodology and reflection on the field. As a feminist researcher, it was important for me to be critical of my own position in Metro Manila and Cavite in order to understand how my multiple privileges shape my interactions with locals in the field, despite their different socio-economic backgrounds, gender, and political or religious affiliations pertaining to reproduction. Below I critically reflect on the use of feminist methodology in these sites and how it affected my data collection experiences.

Feminist Methodology in Metro Manila and Cavite

Positionality and Privilege

My privilege as both a Westerner and researcher has implicated me in the economic initiatives that have pushed so many communities further into the margins of the Philippines' social and urban landscapes. From moments re-visiting the supra-consumerist venues of Mall of Asia (MOA) and Mega Mall as both a tourist and familiar visitor, to my accommodation arrangement in the heart of Katipunan Avenue's busy university section, it became evident to me that Metro Manila's progress also resulted in the displacement of urban poor families who in the past, resided on the steps of MOA and on the fringes of Bonifacio Global City.

Navigating through the city's new urban spaces as a North American—but also as an ethnic Filipina—is confusing in itself as it was often unclear whether I was a complete outsider to the Philippine land and culture or if I did indeed *fit in* with the populace, whether I was situated in the provincial regions just outside of Metro Manila or if I was traversing the bustling

streets of southern Sampaloc. I am a child of *balikbayan* parents, which is a term for nationals who left the Philippines but return for temporary visits (“balik” means to “return” and “bayan” is “nation”). Anna Guevarra (2006) suggests that the term, “connotes a privileged class status”, since *balikbayans* are usually citizens of their new countries or possess dual citizenship with the Philippines (Guevarra 2006, p. 528). As well, they are mobile citizens, able to travel back and forth to the homeland and the place of their newfound livelihoods. Regardless of my shared ethnicity with Filipinos, my multiple privileges of class, citizenship (Canadian), marital status (unmarried and without children), and of being *balikbayan* kin dictated my experiences on the field and impacted my exchanges with the individuals who I spoke to and interviewed for this project.

In many instances I felt as though I did blend in, especially since the *developed* locations that I frequented with relatives and friends are spatial and urban hybrids of Western and Filipino cultural settings. They are designed so that one momentarily forgets the region’s issues of widespread poverty, informal housing, and “squatter” communities, as these marginalised communities are displaced in areas that are so invisible to the Western and *balikbayan* gaze yet also so near to these same developments. Bobby Benedicto (2014), describes Manila in similar juxtapositions, calling it “a space where the mundane effects of capitalist modernity were piled, a landscape of contradictions” (p. xix). While in these spaces, I was certain that I “belonged” in the Philippines—that I was indisputably *Filipina*. But once extracted and removed from these commercialised zones, I was confronted with the recognition of my own outsider privilege and the fact that I am in many ways still foreign to the Philippines. In my particular case and experience in the field, my sense of “belonging” was made imaginary by these modernised grounds.

Privilege also resided in the fact that the issue of reproductive needs and access did not affect me directly, as I also discuss in the introduction to this thesis. As a resident of Canada with access to Western healthcare, reproductive health is more so available to me in my own home country. As an outsider conducting field research around Metro Manila, there were some advantages to this as I was able to gather insight from individuals who had varied sentiments and experiences with reproduction, intimacy, and family planning. Interviewees were able to candidly disclose their opinions, personal experiences and intimate details, simply because they did not view me as being grounded on one side of the RH debate at the local level. Instead, I was a curious observer and inquisitive investigator exploring how reproductive dilemmas are in fact, shaped so much by external forces and globalised material circumstances. But regardless of how much I was seen as an *outsider* with open-minded interests in these narratives, I was transparent in my own feminist concerns for poorer women's hardships and their numerous struggles that result from having a lack of access to reproductive options. With even the staunchest opponents of the RH Law, I brought these concerns to the forefront of our one-on-one discussions amidst the tense, electric political moment.

Unforgettably, the temporal setting was ideal as the RH Law had just passed into signage and responses to this event were both fervent and affective. Many who either opposed or supported the law (or had "mixed" opinions about the legislation) were sharing their narratives and views with me in ways that were being shared with others as well. For the individuals whose political views were not being addressed or discussed in their daily lives, our exchanges were seen as opportunities to vocalise their views or personal stories. Having documented the narratives of individuals who have such a diverse set of opinions on reproduction and complex reproductive dilemmas, I do disclose to my readers that although I support public access to a

wide range of reproductive rights and options for Filipinos, I also fully *respect* the sentiments of my interviewees who reject or are anxious about the legislation. As I later discuss in my thesis, even those who are unwavering in their opposition of the RH Law are still deeply concerned with the plight of those in need of family planning options and with the gendered struggles of poor Filipino women. Reproductive *dilemmas* can refer to an individual's emotional decision-making *process* about family planning methods, parenting, or maternal health. However, I also use this term to refer to the personal struggles of those who oppose the RH Law, while also being aware of the material *realities* (of poverty, violence, shame, and health complications) of the many who express great need for the law's full implementation. Various nuances embedded in reproductive dilemmas created by changing gender dynamics and economic markets are explored throughout this thesis, and are present in the experiences of the interviewees. And such nuances include how many RH opponents still express compassion and sympathy for poor Filipino men and women, even if they disagree with the legislation's mandates.

Another key indicator of my own positionality in the field was my *mobility* and my ability to move in, out, and through the spaces that were occupied by my research informants. Such a privilege is attributed to my *balikbayan* kin status, which allowed me to be “eminently equipped for travel and/or traversing across embodied sets of cultural semantics” (Manalansan 2014, p. 64). Some neighbours in Cavite—where I resided during the first three months of fieldwork—offered to drive my mother and sister and I to different shopping complexes near the compound. Occasionally, we would also reach the edges of Pasay, where Manila's skyline meets the tides of the bay. When I eventually moved to Quezon City on my own after the first few months in Cavite, a family friend, Boy, offered to drive me to my interviews or whenever I needed to make errands around the vast city. I was content to pay him for his service rather than

depending solely on local taxis and traditional *jeepneys*. Living right at the core of Katipunan Avenue, however, tricycles, *jeepneys*, and Manila's Rail Transit (or "MRT") were also accessible to me, and I used these modes of transportation to explore the region or meet with friends in other neighbourhoods or business districts in Metro Manila. In addition, I had multiple "homes" in the Philippines while conducting field research, as I was able to stay with relatives in Cavite and Marikina during weekends in addition to my rented unit in the heart of Katipunan Avenue.

For the female informal settlers who agreed to be part of the group discussion in Quezon City (Chapter 5), mobility is less so a liberty. Rather, it is a strategy to adapt to flexibilised labour demands, or it is enforced on them by urban and commercial development projects. Stability and the *right* to stay rooted on their settlement are uncertain for these women. It is challenging to reconcile the power imbalances between the research participants and myself in this project, but I hope that by foregrounding my position and respectfully presenting the accounts of the interlocutors throughout the thesis (as truthfully as possible and without judgment), I can at least mitigate this imbalance. Cindy Katz (1996) urges researchers to also recognise and address the underlying power inequalities that are present in their fieldwork, but asks that we move forward and *through* such "contradictions": "It is time to live and work with and against the contradictions rather than employing self-confession as a barrier against them. Social scientists who engage in field research must find non-innocent (self-reflexive and clearly positioned) ways to work in the world such that we can at once uncover common bonds and recognize differences" (p.177).

The task of completely eliminating power imbalances between myself as a *researcher* and my narrators as my *subjects* is impossible given our varied socio-economic backgrounds and

positionality. It is useful in this case then, to highlight the importance of employing a feminist methodological approach to my data collection, analysis, and sharing. While there is no concrete definition of feminist methodology, Sandra Harding (1987) claims that a pivotal defining aspect that separates this methodology or approach from other traditional social scientific approaches, is the process of revealing yourself as the *researcher*, embedding this position within the same spaces of those being *researched*, and exposing yourself for further critique and analysis. She elaborates below:

The best feminist analysis goes beyond these innovations in subject matter in a crucial way: it insists that the inquirer her/himself be placed in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter, thereby recovering the entire research process for scrutiny in the results of research. That is, the class, race, culture, and gender assumptions, beliefs, and behaviours of the researcher her/himself must be placed within the frame of the picture that she/he attempts to paint. Thus the researcher appears to us not as an invisible, anonymous voice of authority, but as a real, historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests.

(Harding, 1987, p. 9)

Indeed, experiences in the field are commonly burdened with various levels of inequalities and differences between researchers and participants. And it is only by being “self-reflexive and clearly positioned” to both my interlocutors and to the readers of this work that I can begin to share the personal stories that provide insight into the macro and micro interactions between global markets, reproductive dilemmas, and gender dynamics.

Urban (Metro Manila) Versus Port-Rural (Cavite) Sites

Although there are components of haphazardness and convenience to how these two sites--Cavite and Metro Manila--were selected for my ethnography and qualitative research (Imus again, is my grandmother's hometown), both locales are valuable examples of urban and post-rural spaces in and around the metropolis. What, for instance, are some of the continuities and discontinuities of reproductive dilemmas between the two sites? What are the ways in which such dilemmas are maintained by the global, and how are gender expectations and dynamics different between the two locales?

In regards to how the global continues to affect these two sites in differing ways, some of these differences can be located in the urban or sub-urban make-up of both landscapes--both differ in their spatial compositions and are globalising at varied and uneven rates. In Chapter 5, I describe the density of Quezon City, a city that is continuously attempting to accommodate its population, especially those living in the margins of informal settlements. In Chapter 4, the town of Imus (in Cavite) displays the workings of the global in its own physical terrain. In certain ways, the landscape and way of life are rural in their rhythms, but new urban infrastructure has also begun to interject the town. Modern edifices, residential complexes, and commercial buildings stand in contrast to its *probinsya* ("provincial") surroundings. While at first glance these urban changes seem to convey Imus' physical contradictions (urban versus rural, modern versus traditional), they actually represent the town's transitional phase, and an anticipation that it may be catching up to the urban elaborateness of Metro Manila.

But the contrasts between the heavily urbanised spaces of Metro Manila and the post-rural spaces of its surrounding provinces do not end in their physicalities. The two sites also harbour cultural ideas of gender dynamics and roles that seem to shift depending on the specific locale within and around Metro Manila's borders. As I moved through these areas while in the

field, these differing gender ideologies were projected onto me during my encounters with the local inhabitants of these sites. Traditional ideas and expectations about marriage and motherhood for instance, are more widespread in post-rural sites such as Cavite. In Chapter 4, I recount how a family friend (Tomas) is surprised to learn that by the age of thirty, I was still unwed and childless. These conversations about my marital status and how I was not yet a mother occurred more than once with different individuals. They also only occurred during my time spent in the province outside of Metro Manila, where women tend to marry and/or have children in their late adolescence and early twenties.

In Metro Manila, likely because of the growing expat population, upper-middle class enclaves, bustling Commercial Business Districts (CBDs) and globally-inspired popular media, these ideas are less expected in Filipino men and women, especially those from higher socio-economic backgrounds. Meeting other women closer to my age and who did not yet have children or spouses became more common during my time in Quezon City and when I explored other areas of Metro Manila. These individuals' more urban, cosmopolitan lifestyles influence how they practice intimacy and reproduction, which tend to deviate from the traditional teachings of the Catholic Church. Access to contraceptives is also easier for the upper-middle classes, who are much less affected by the status of the RH Law in the country. They thus express a disconnection from the RH debate, and indicate their experiences of non-dilemmas to me. While there is no chapter dedicated to the non-dilemmas of upper class Filipinos in this thesis, I reflect on such political disaffections in my conclusion.

But as Metro Manila comprises drastic class and economic juxtapositions, it is no surprise that the poorest and most disenfranchised communities within the same spaces make more difficult decisions relating to sex, intimacy, and reproduction. Such dilemmas (e.g. illegal

abortion, avoiding conflicts with partners or spouses related to sex) are further explored in Chapters 4 and 5, where women who rely on remittances or live precariously in “squatter” areas relay their reproductive troubles and dilemmas.

Reproductive dilemmas (and non-dilemmas) are reflective of the intersectional political, religious, and historical contexts that shape the societal and cultural environments of Metro Manila. However, the complex range of these dilemmas also represent the multitude of local contexts present in the region, and how they are affected by their own urban or post-rural surroundings. Depending on the level of urbanisation in these areas (and on the class backgrounds of the inhabitants), modernity, reproduction, and intimacies are engaged with in multifaceted ways. Discourses and ideologies on gender roles, marriage, sexuality, motherhood and reproduction are also never fixed or homogenous. Rather, they shift and vary within and along the borders of Metro Manila and its surrounding provincial zones.

Yet, regardless of how these dynamic sites differ from one another, the continuities between them include the ways in which they show how reproductive dilemmas or non-dilemmas are impacted by more than religious discourses. The global operates in Metro Manila and Cavite in a robust and multi-layered fashion, and intertwines with discourses of gender that range between traditional and modern, producing the spectrum of reproductive dilemmas present in the two sites.

Mixed Methods, Social Capital, and “Kuwentuhan”

The topic of introducing reproductive health legislation in the Philippines has been a controversial one for more than a decade. As mentioned, approximately one month after I had

arrived in the Philippines for fieldwork, the RH Bill was finally signed into law and prompted heated responses by organised “pro” and “anti” RH groups during the aftermath of this historical legislative event. Such reactions created an appropriate temporal setting, and functioned as effective starting points in conversations and in recorded interviews. Months later when the implementation of the RH Law was halted by the Supreme Court, both opposing groups continued advocating against or in support of the legislation, and were especially visible surrounding the May 2013 General Elections. At this time, hundreds of “pro life” Catholic Filipinos came together and launched the “White Vote Movement”, which protested against the RH Law in favour of traditional Catholic and “core family values”. A large number of protesters who supported the law mobilised together and launched the “Purple Vote Movement” campaign (with many who also self-identified as Catholics) (Dioquino 2013).

Without these political events and incidents to refer to as starting points or passageways into the in-depth conversations that I documented for this research, the exploration of reproductive dilemmas (and the related topics of sex and intimacy) would have been far more challenging to conduct. Such a feat—of researching reproduction, sex, relationships, and intimacy—has been a methodological concern for feminists, especially since the act of extracting such private experiences and translating them for public knowledge can reproduce and replicate power relations between the researcher and the researched. Feminist social researchers, including those who research intimate life, employ several techniques to minimise the exploitation and re-colonisation that are commonly reproduced in qualitative research methods (Wolf and Deere 1996). Here, the method of anonymisation is used for all speakers in this research (including those who I had informal conversations with) in order to reduce the undesired exposure of the interviewees and to protect their identities in this research. All

interviewees also provided consent to be recorded and transcribed (either verbally or via email). For those who shared more sensitive information about their personal lives (e.g., experiences with abortion, sex, and details about marital relations), I requested consent *more than once*—prior to the interviews and afterwards through Facebook messaging or by email. This ensured that the consent given during fieldwork was still valid even after I had left the Philippines, and that the experiences featured and analysed in this research were provided with full approval.

As the *snowball method* was utilised (expanding the pool of interviewees through personal and professional contacts, and from referrals from those who were also interviewed), the unevenness of power imbalances was substantially reduced. A case where this was especially pronounced is the group interview that was conducted with seven women who live in an informal settlement and who came together with the help of a mutual friend—a woman named Maria whom I befriended while volunteering for a feminist organisation in Quezon City (Chapter 5). While there are implications for doing research in such marginalised areas and especially on sensitive topics such as reproduction and intimacy, the power dynamics were significantly shifted since it was Maria who invited me to meet with her female friends in the informal settler community, and who organised this group meeting. She acted as a gatekeeper and co-moderated the discussion with the women, whom she also selected herself for the session.

Also imperative to note is how the dynamics of the aforementioned group discussion replicated a social activity culturally known in the Philippines as “*kuwentuhan*” or “conversation”, and which is firmly embedded in Filipino daily life. Robert E. Javier (2004) describes *kuwentuhan* as “a naturally occurring phenomenon, a process of sharing and telling stories among individuals to figure out or to make sense about their world and their experiences” (p. 12). Thus, the configuration of the group discussion in the informal settler community in

Quezon City helped to minimise power disparities since it simulated the everyday conversational dynamics of *kuwentuhan*. Dissimilar to the common (and problematic) research procedure of expunging information from vulnerable communities and (re)presenting their experiences for public knowledge, I was encouraged by Maria and the women to take part in an exchange of experiences with them, and to both observe and participate in their *kuwentuhan*. I remained an *outsider* to the community and to the women, yet they collectively agreed to invite and include me in *their* discussion under their conditions and within their own communal space. As the women trusted Maria (who also acts as their appointed community organiser), they extended their trust to me and shared personal stories on sensitive issues related to reproduction, desire, intimacy, and even their struggles with faith.

The methodological intentions of this research have been to employ *mixed* ethnographic methods of observation (including participating in the above-mentioned *kuwentuhan*), and semi-structured interviews with individuals from different sections of Metro Manila and Cavite. These individuals differed in gender, socio-economic class, age, religious beliefs, had varied opinions on reproductive health, and their own individual experiences with reproduction. The research sample is wide-ranging—twenty-four individuals were interviewed and consented to being recorded. This sample comprises representatives from non-profit organisations, faith-based organisations or laity, academics, community organisers, and health workers. Additionally, ethnographic notes were taken throughout the seven-month stay in Metro Manila and Cavite, and *kuwentuhan* sessions or informal conversations with several individuals were documented as these types of exchanges occurred daily in each locale I stayed in. I also regularly visited the nearby town of Marikina, which is located in close proximity to the area of Quezon City where I was based while conducting semi-structured interviews around the rest of Metro Manila.

In each location, few individuals who I knew personally (relatives or family friends) operated as gatekeepers to their own particular settings, whether they were part of specific academic circles, close to the NGO community, or were well-known in their own neighbourhoods and small communities. As well, I participated as a Research Fellow at Ateneo de Manila University, which is located just across the street from my temporary residence in Quezon City. This was also the location where I was able to easily access interviews with a few faculty members through individuals I had befriended at the institution. As key informants, the individuals who assisted me in the field brought me along to meet their colleagues, peers, neighbours, or other relatives for interviews. In some cases, introductions with participants occurred haphazardly, and recorded interview sessions would be scheduled for future dates.

I recall a close family friend, for instance, who agreed to be interviewed in Dasmariñas, Cavite and shared his personal story of disappointment when he learned that his partner decided to have an abortion without notifying him. After our discussion, he made numerous phone calls to his nearby *kaibigan* (friends) and invited them to his residence so that they could also participate in my research. Within fifteen minutes, his young friends appeared at his home, ready to speak with me and share their stories and sentiments about reproduction. In Marikina, a close friend of my father's acted as a host and a guide, and walked me to the offices of her co-workers at the nearby university so that I could personally organise semi-structured interviews with them. While in the field, I kept myself open and flexible to these types of unexpected moments, as details of individuals' intimate politics about reproduction or details about their personal lives only seemed to emerge in unstructured and relaxed exchanges.

Volunteer work at a feminist organisation in Quezon City and the use of the *snowball method* also led me to meet individuals who invited me into particular settings where

reproductive dilemmas were being influenced by specific community organising, local politics, and spatial transformations. Maria, who I briefly mentioned earlier, is someone whom I had met while doing work as a volunteer. I also was invited by a woman named Charlene who I met through mutual friends to visit Sampaloc, where a few of the major “pro life” organisations are active and have a significant presence in the populated neighbourhoods. In the Philippines, having social capital mattered greatly in the field, especially since extended families, networks of kin, and familial relationships are common in the culture. Thus, being *referred* to others via mutual friends or family members facilitated my movements and provided me access to my narrators, and significantly influenced my fieldwork and ethnographic experiences.

The data therefore does not represent *large groups* or *populations* or intends to *generalise* the experiences of Metro Manila or Cavite’s inhabitants. The narratives and interviews collected in this thesis represent a wide spectrum of views and opinions. They are each filled with the nuances of individual experiences, and challenge the dichotomous nature of the public discourses on reproductive health. As well, the data is organised as case studies, as a way to explore the narratives and the specific contexts in which they take place in (or refer to), as a way to link larger themes of gender expectations and economic globalisation to the opinions and/or predicaments surrounding reproduction, intimacy, and reproductive politics.

Lastly, I spent my own leisure time with friends who I met in Manila—young expats from Canada and Australia, and upper-class locals from Sampaloc, Pasay, and Quezon City—exploring the nightlife of Metro Manila. We frequented bars along Timog Avenue and Tomas Morato in Quezon City, and dined in the lush spaces of Greenbelt, Makati and The Fort (also referred to as “Global”, a short form for Bonifacio Global City). My own *kaibigan* integrated me into the upper-class scenes and settings of the city, where reproductive dilemmas were not

prominent issues to the people who frequented these areas. Still, these experiences and conversations only taught me that such dilemmas are dependent on the community, the space, and the individual. Global economic processes can complicate reproductive dilemmas, but they can also accentuate reproductive privileges or produce *non-dilemmas* for those who already live comfortably in Metro Manila's diverse and contradictory grounds.

Using "Global ethnography" to Study Reproduction and Intimacies

Indeed, these personal accounts and views—from individuals who support reproductive health, oppose it, or feel "mixed" about it—led me to understand how features of global restructuring have *so much to do* with reproduction and its related issues (marital intimacy, closeness, decisions about relationships, and ideas about sex and gender). The interactions, exchanges, and conversations that I had with these individuals in Metro Manila and Cavite urged me to question the larger systemic processes that were guiding their personal opinions and shaping their reproductive and intimate experiences. Class, gender, sexuality, and religious identity play important roles in their experiences and understandings about reproductive health and rights. But even more striking is how the material effects of global restructuring weave these diverse individuals together into a larger community whose everyday lives are defined by the ebbs and flows of the markets. As key informants ranged from passionate RH advocates to economists, theologians, health care professionals, and stark "pro life" affiliates, the conversations that took place in this politically energised context helped to generate new questions about the reach of global processes and the globalised environment in relation to intimate life and reproductive experiences.

But it is a sizeable feat to consider both macro and micro systems of gender, economy, and personal dilemmas related to reproduction and intimacy without acknowledging striking limitations. The methods employed in this research offer informative *insight* into how the systems of economic restructuring and traditional gender expectations interplay to produce intricate reproductive experiences. Still, it is impossible to research on reproduction—whether related to local experiences, rights-based approaches, theological discussions, and socio-political analyses—without looking at larger structural issues or systems that create conditions for reproductive dilemmas or *non-dilemmas*, as well as the rich and complicated emotions that accompany them.

An acknowledgement of this necessity in research includes the work of Browner and Sargent (2011), which explores various methodological issues and assets in the study of reproduction and globalisation. Also inspired by the theoretical discussions of Ginsburg and Rapp (1991) on the several political discussions related to the study of reproduction, Browner and Sargent's volume *Reproduction, Globalization, and the State: New Theoretical and Ethnographic Perspectives* (2011) bring together essays and case studies from different regions that look at the micro and macro interactions between reproduction and global, structural forces. In their introduction, they assert that, "intrinsic to global processes are reciprocal connections and consequent interactions across time and space" (Browner and Sargent 2011, p. 6). Thus, according to the authors, studying reproduction as a "global process" also involves "recognizing that the concepts of individual, local, state, and the global are mutually constituent forces that must be operationalized in relation to one another—and that these definitions are contingent on the specific topic, setting, and nature of the research in question" (Browner and Sargent 2011, p. 6).

Valuable to this research, is their discussion of “global ethnography” as a method in exploring these issues from a multi-dimensional lens that encompasses both the local and global as spaces of knowledge and insight. They pay special attention to Michael Burawoy (2000) who, at the turn of the millennium, sought to understand processes of globalisation from a methodological and technical standpoint. Burawoy thus proposed “global ethnography” as a research and methodological approach for further investigating ethnographic *sites* as being reconfigured and formed by global connections. Browner and Sargent write:

Michael Burawoy offers the concept of global ethnography as a means toward advancing ethnographic studies beyond the boundaries of space and time. He urges ethnographers to investigate the constant movements of subjects, commodities, currencies, images, and technologies in relation to one another and to do so by incorporating perspectives “from singular but connected sites” (2000b, p.4-5)...such a research strategy starts with human experiences, as defined in part by their spatial and temporal dimensions, such as regional migration patterns. These are then examined in the contexts of other levels of analysis (e.g., state, global) and particular domains—in our case, reproduction. Sites, then, take on relevance not necessarily in and of themselves but principally as manifestations of lived experience.

(Browner and Sargent, 2011, p. 7)

Hence, the methods used to explore reproductive dilemmas and politics in the various sites (and analysed as case studies) in Metro Manila and Cavite share similar research objectives with Burawoy’s “global ethnography”. Metro Manila and Cavite are not static or unchanging sites. Rather, they are shifting urban and suburban terrains, and have transformed drastically alongside the social spheres of which reproduction and intimacy are part. They are made up of “constant movements” as Browner and Sargent (2011) suggest, and are places where the interactions

between the global and local are always present, even in local and national debates about reproduction. Thus, I refer to global ethnographic methods of inquiry and reflection as they examine the specific combination of local intimate dynamics and global economic processes, and how they interact to produce and shape personal dilemmas of reproduction in the Philippine context. While Wilson (2004) offers “intimate economies” as an important theoretical framework for analysing how reproduction and intimacies are in a relationship with the global, Burawoy’s (2000) “global ethnography” is embedded in my research methodology and layered with feminist intentions.

Organisation of the Dissertation

In the following chapter I provide a more detailed history of the Philippine Catholic Church’s rise to political relevancy since the events surrounding the People Power Revolution of 1986. While reproductive politics and oppositions from large religious institutions or state powers have occurred in other contexts, the case of the Philippines shows how the Church became a legitimate and influential political actor in the state (despite the fact that the Philippines is not considered a theocracy) and has swayed the direction of legislative matters in the recent past. Its impact on social and political issues is also indicative of the strong presence of Roman Catholic viewpoints in the country, and its official position on reproductive health has contributed to the polarising public and local discourses on the issue and shaped state legislation on family, marriage, and other unions representing intimate life. The “culture of death” as a rhetorical device is also discussed, including its religious and historical beginnings at the Vatican and how it became a powerful term among the CBCP and “pro life” groups.

I then turn to a larger discussion about *why* the country's economic development policies are crucial to the theoretical analysis of reproductive dilemmas in Metro Manila. In the Philippines, global restructuring, especially since the time of Ferdinand Marcos' term as president in the 1970s, has included the implementation of labour migration export policies that have dramatically transformed the socio-geographical make-up of the Philippines, and in ways that are unique to this specific context. Filipinos, for instance, are one of the largest sources of global migrant labour and have been leaving their loved ones for long (and sometimes undetermined) periods of time to work overseas. They have been doing this as a way to financially support their "left behind" families through the sending of remittances, or as a way to find professional opportunities in their desired, alternative locales. As a result, several industries have also flourished in response to the transnational consumer interests of overseas Filipinos, with the telecommunications industry being an exceptional example (Aguilar Jr. 2014, pg. 6). Social structures, families, and household dynamics have also changed in profound ways because of these global market shifts, which also indicates that economic development and labour export policies have tangible implications on reproduction and intimate relationships.

Both of these histories overlap at different points and were initiated by Ferdinand Marcos' term as president and eventual dictator. Marcos played a significant role in the economic development of the Philippines, and was the key actor in implementing labour export policies as a development strategy for the state's dismal foreign debt. His ousting and the events preceding the People Power Revolution helped the Catholic Church's transition into a key political player in state matters. This of course, led to the decade long and polarising debate surrounding reproductive health which involved representatives of the Church and their influence on state and civil society discourses on reproduction, sexuality, and intimate relations.

Both historical developments also helped to shape the contemporary religious, social, and economic climate that produces such complex experiences with reproduction and globalised intimacies.

It is important to note here, that although this chapter explores the narratives surrounding the Philippine Church during the martial law period and the People Power Revolution, Catholics are not the only religious group in the country, nor are they the only Christian group amongst Filipinos. Indeed, religious diversity is robust in the Philippines. I focus on the Catholic Church largely due to the fact that their dominance in the political sphere, *especially* since martial law, has complicated and hindered reproductive health legislation for a number of years. The lived experiences and realities of Filipinos, however, include dynamic pluralism in religious affiliation, faith, and practice.

Kessler and Rüland (2006), for instance, note the substantial popularity of two Catholic Charismatic lay organisations, El Shaddai and Couples for Christ, who, only a decade or so ago, claimed a combined three million registered members (p. 74). Another notable Christian organisation—also with a large global following amongst the Filipino diaspora—is the Iglesia Ni Cristo (INC), which boasts having approximately two millions members worldwide and 5000 evangelical churches and congregations in the Philippines alone.⁸ The southern Bansamoro region, which includes Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago, is also predominantly Muslim.

Thus, the actuality of a varied population in regards to religious practice, identity, and affiliation is vibrant, and undermines the apparent dominance of the Catholic Church, even if it remains influential in the political arena. As Cornelio (2013) recounts, “...although Catholicism

⁸ Buena, M. MAP: Where in the World is Iglesia Ni Cristo? *Rappler.com*. 23 August 2015. [Online] Available at: <http://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/iq/102905-map-iglesia-ni-cristo-congregations-around-world>

remains the dominant religion among Filipinos, migration and the emergence of other religions are two processes challenging impressions of cultural homogeneity today” (p. 41). My focus on the Catholic Church in the Philippines and its discourses on reproduction, family planning, and intimacies, in no way intends to overlook or obscure other religious subjectivities in the country. Rather, I refer to and concentrate on the Catholic Church’s trajectory prior to and after the People Power Revolution, precisely to track how it has deepened its own role as a dominant religious institution in the recent decades.

While Chapter 2 outlines and sketches the details of this religious and economic backdrop, Chapter 3 begins to explore the tensions, contradictions, and complexities of individual sentiments about reproduction and reproductive health. Negotiations and individual definitions of faith and religion are definitely part of these complexities. As some of my participants express, advocating for or agreeing with reproductive health is something that should not necessarily compromise one’s religiosity, even if the RH debate is framed as a binary topic with extreme opposing sides. OFWs and transnational families are also discussed in this chapter, as they both exemplify how “intimate economies” are already at work in the Philippines, and how they also undermine traditional structures of family and marriage (which are both viewed as being “threatened” by the RH Law). On the other hand, several interlocutors who oppose the RH Law also refer to neoliberal concepts of *responsibility* and individual *self-discipline* (*masipag*) in their arguments against the necessity of reproductive health legislation in the Philippines. This chapter both substantiates and justifies my exploration of gender expectations, intimacy, and reproductive politics in the country. An analysis of the country’s economic arrangements with global markets and its entanglement with economic neoliberal values is critical to this exploration.

Chapters 4 and 5 offer separate case studies that embody and present the converging issues of gender expectations and dynamics and how the effects and processes of economic development policies impact reproductive dilemmas on the ground. Chapter 4 looks specifically at three small families in a compound in Cavite, who struggle with intimacies and reproductive predicaments because of remittance arrangements with overseas relatives. Chapter 5 presents the case study of the women who live as informal settlers in Quezon City, and are compelled to make difficult decisions on family planning because of their constant state of precariousness. They reveal how they manage threats of eviction and separation from partners, and how both processes are caused by urban development and labour flexibilisation in the city. Both case studies look at those “left behind” by loved ones who have sought employment elsewhere and overseas, and how the “local” politics of reproduction and family planning are in actuality, molded by the global systems of labour and remittance economies and by changing physical spatialities.

In the Afterword of the thesis, I reflect on my final week in Quezon City where I was compelled to question my feminist methodology and re-think the implications of writing about dilemmas and intimacies. In this section, I discuss how the politics of *disclosure* and *discretion* contribute to unequal power dynamics in research, and how offering details about my own reproductive dilemmas and intimate life is a key part of the feminist intentions of this larger project. More importantly, the act of *disclosure* is part of the journey to becoming a more reflexive and critical feminist researcher.

The conclusion of this thesis includes a meditation on each case study and returns to a broader discussion of reproduction and global economic effects on intimate life in Metro Manila and Cavite. I revisit documented memories of Metro Manila, and reflect on how the city itself is

a contradictory place that sets the foundation for reproductive dilemmas to form, and for emotional and physical predicaments related to intimacy to emerge. Here, I recall how daily life and the visceral experiences in the different areas of the city are somehow infused by reminders of how the global operates. I also discuss how the analytic of gender is present in each chapter, and how it is always a factor in individual dilemmas about reproduction and in intimate life.

Furthermore, I contemplate on some of the limitations of the research, including my methodological shortcomings. I ponder on those who I could *not* speak with, interview, or exchange views with during *kuwentuhan*, and how these voices can enrich future studies on reproduction and globalised intimacies. Finally, I return to how the project as a whole offers the Philippine context as an example of how “intimate economies” operates, and how this concept can help us think about future research on gender, reproduction, the global, and intimate life.

Chapter 2: The Church, Revolutions, and Global Restructuring in the Philippines

For decades, the battle for reproductive rights around the world has involved the opposition of prominent religious institutions such as the Roman Catholic Church, which promotes only natural methods of family planning for married couples in traditional unions. In the Philippines, the struggle of introducing, passing, and implementing a comprehensive reproductive health law has been particularly challenging because of the Church’s close involvement and profound influence in political and government initiatives. This chapter provides a broad account of some of the political events that took place in recent Philippine history, the Church’s role in these events, and how these pivotal moments elevated the religious institution to its current position in Philippine society and political affairs. These particular

historical incidents gave the Philippine Church political propulsion and allowed it to interfere significantly with matters of the state. This is evident in how Catholic values became written into the 1987 Philippine Constitution after the People Power Revolution of 1986.

I further discuss the role of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) in obstructing the RH Law's legislation and who continue to reject its reproductive health mandates for the Filipino people. One important aspect of the CBCP's political opposition and campaign against the RH Law includes the appropriation of Pope John Paul II's concept of the "culture of death". The CBCP uses the same term to describe the moral threats that the RH Law poses against Filipino society, culture, and traditional values.

This term still resonates with pious Filipino Catholics, and has only fueled the intensity and divisiveness of the RH public debate, deepening the rift between RH Law supporters and opponents. The CBCP became authoritative speakers on the intimate matters of family planning, sex, sexuality and reproductive rights in ways that only created a hostile forum for public discourses on the RH Law years later, and which continue to cause further personal conflicts with reproductive experiences for many who still consider themselves to be faithful Catholics.

But, while the Church and the CBCP continued to gain momentum as an important religio-political entity since Ferdinand Marcos' ousting, the wheels of the Philippines' labour export policies were already in motion. Thus, there are two overlapping and coinciding trajectories that are outlined in this chapter: the emergence of the Philippine Catholic Church in recent state affairs and the acceleration of the Philippines as a major zone of export and migrant labour. Both of these histories merge at my exploration of reproductive health dilemmas in later chapters—as these dilemmas once again, are formed in a context where the effects of a

flourishing labour economy and gender dynamics intersect. The ardent religious debate on the RH Law and reproduction, of course, also shapes this socio-political backdrop.

The Philippine Church's Role in People Power (1986) and People Power II (2001)

The history of the Catholic Church in the Philippines dates back to the country's Spanish colonial times, but for the purposes of looking at how it became entangled with reproductive politics in the state, I commence my discussion of the Church at the time of Ferdinand Marcos' presidency—or rather, to select events preceding his eventual ousting in 1986. Ferdinand Marcos's reign as the 6th elected president of the Republic of the Philippines was marred by corruption, greed, and an unappeasable thirst for indefinite power that had taken a dramatic turn when Marcos finally called for martial law on September 22, 1972.⁹ Over the years during his presidential terms, Marcos and his administration experienced increasing tension with the CBCP, especially since the Church itself played such an immense social and political role in mobilising the Filipino people and forming a strong opposition against his tainted administration.

But a seemingly unified and formidable Church hierarchy was not in place during the early years of martial law. Ofreneo (1987) cites internal divisions and disagreements between the religious hierarchy and posits that the initial perception of the Church position during this moment was one of “weakness, apathy, and acquiescence to the Marcos regime” (p. 324). And according to a survey conducted in 1973, fourteen bishops, fifty-nine priests, twenty-two nuns, three brothers, and fifty-six laymen and laywomen expressed dissatisfaction with the “seeming

⁹ Marcos is notorious for buying votes, cronyism, and nepotism. He and his wife Imelda were reportedly worth \$10 million USD, while their country was in deplorable debt to the IMF and the United States. Please see: McGeown, K. What happened to the Marcos Fortune? *BBC News Asia*. 24 January 2013. [Online] Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-21022457>

inability of the Church to act in a clear and decisive way to confront or at least mitigate repression and injustice” (Ofreneo 1987, p. 324). There was a great need on the ground for the Church to become actively involved in the plight of the Filipino people during the years of Marcos’ dictatorship, and to essentially take a stance against the wrongdoings of the presidential regime.

Thus, during these desperate times and amidst tensions and divisions within the institution itself, the Church and religious personnel began to work alongside the political organising of communists, left-leaning students and journalists, and other such opponents of the Marcos administration. Religious leaders and laymen were working underground to destabilise Marcos’ oppressive government, and even did so in quieter ways that were still effective in mobilising the masses. They committed themselves to working with impoverished communities, for instance, but although this appeared to be a move that was focused solely on the livelihoods of the Filipino poor, it was simultaneously one that was politically significant. The strategy behind this lay in the fact that a “pro-poor stance” meant that clergy and laypeople worked “even more closely with marginalized sectors of the community, including those in rural areas beyond the state’s surveillance” (Bautista 2010, p. 33).

Beginning in 1979, the CBCP issued several pastoral letters that publicly criticised the Marcos administration, specifically its economic policies (to be discussed later) and its human rights policies (Youngblood 1987, p. 1241). These public attacks along with the increasing influence of the CBCP and religious communities created tension between Philippine bishops and the president. Select scholars (Bresnan 1986; Youngblood 1990; Shirley 2004) who have investigated the complicated and tumultuous relationship between Marcos and the Church, cite Marcos’ own paranoia and feelings of impending threat by the Church and its faithful followers

as the CBCP began to fortify its political voice against his regime. Marcos' expressions were often explicitly written in personal diaries during his presidential terms.¹⁰ But even in the face of an emerging opposition, Marcos continued to act as a relentless dictator. His power was defended by a loyal military, and his most dedicated supporters were either bribed or rewarded with tremendous amounts of property, wealth, or positions of power. Fundamental civil and democratic rights were also being violated under martial law. Any influential "dissident" was arrested, jailed, or murdered, and arbitrary detention or house arrests applied to any individual with anti-Marcos sentiments, including left-leaning nuns and priests (Ofreneo 1987, p. 323).

By 1976, two years after the charismatic Jaime Cardinal Sin was appointed as Archbishop of the Philippine Catholic Church and leader of the CBCP, the country had already witnessed numerous attacks on religious leaders and communities. Marcos and his administration refused to cease from arresting members of the clergy, deporting foreign missionaries, and ordering raids on Church properties (Shirley 2004, p. 59). These measures against groups who sided with the Church¹¹ became more extreme after the CBCP officially requested the government to lift martial law and restore civil liberties to the Filipino people, "and thus pave the way for healing the wounds of the nation" (Shirley 2004; 57).¹² Thus, the following decade saw the Church's activities and Cardinal Sin himself being monitored by Marcos and his followers, and the government's intense distrust of the CBCP's leaders.

But even Marcos' authoritarian rule could not endure the unrest that eventually developed into the People Power or "EDSA" Revolution in 1986. Leading up to this historical revolution, the CBCP capitalised on its own elevated and faith-based influence on the Anti-Marcos

¹⁰ See William C. Rempel's *Delusions of a Dictator: The mind of Marcos as revealed in his secret diaries* (1993).

¹¹ One such group included the Communist Party, which was the key Anti-Marcos group during martial law and which the Church was also involved with in different capacities (Claudio 2013).

¹² This statement was released by the CBCP on September 3, 1974.

movements. It is no wonder then, that Marcos' usurper—Corazon “Cory” Aquino, the widow of the staunchly Anti-Marcos Senator Benigno Aquino Jr.—was appointed to lead the mass resistance of the Filipino people with official sponsorship and support from top religious leaders including Archbishop Cardinal Sin and the rest of the CBCP. Aquino was the ideal candidate to gain the CBCP's sponsorship in their strategy to resist against the Marcos regime. She had a devout Catholic upbringing, and her upper-middle class background allowed her to attend private educational institutions in the United States. But her status as the next promising leadership in Philippine politics elevated only after the tragedy of her husband's assassination in 1983.

Benigno (or “Ninoy”) Aquino was an outspoken critic of the administration since Marcos' first term as president and garnered support and favour from the media and Filipino audiences alike. When martial law was declared in 1972, Ninoy was one of the first of Marcos' adversaries to be arrested and imprisoned (based upon embellished charges, including murder and subversion). He remained imprisoned for almost eight years, where his health deteriorated drastically after he endured a hunger strike against the administration and years later, suffered from a heart attack in 1980. Instead of opting for heart surgery in the Philippines (under fear of healthcare practitioners working under the orders of Marcos), Ninoy Aquino decided to flee to the United States with Cory, where they were exiled and stayed for approximately three years. Eventually, however, Ninoy made the decision to return to the Philippines in 1983 despite warnings that he would be in danger if he ever returned to the country. When he quietly returned to his homeland on August 21, 1983, he was shot in the head at the airport, before even leaving

the Manila airport's premises.¹³ Cory had decided to travel back to the Philippines eleven days after her doomed husband, thus marking her absence from the event of the assassination.

Ninoy's assassination was a key turning point during this dreadful period under martial law, and only revitalised the Anti-Marcos opposition and paved the political path to Cory's ensuing presidency. The country mourned Ninoy by the thousands, and "nuns, priests, church workers, and church-related mass organisations participated in protest actions often enriched with religious overtones" (Ofreneo 1987, p. 327). As a widow of such an esteemed public figure—one who gave a face to the opposition and who was now being deemed a martyr—Cory Aquino was exactly who the Church needed to fortify its work to denounce and finally bring down Marcos' dictatorship. She essentially became a "symbol" of revolt after her husband's assassination, for standing up to Marcos and his administration and by "frequently [making] religious references in her public and private appearances" (Youngblood 1987, p. 1240).

The alliance of Cory Aquino and the CBCP under the leadership of Archbishop Cardinal Sin created a remarkable religious force that not only assisted in liberating the Filipino people from the regime of Ferdinand Marcos, but also promulgated both the new presidential leadership and religious hierarchy to a higher level of political relevance. Demeterio-Melgar (2005) also reflects back to this powerful alliance, which was necessary and effective in consolidating the People Power Revolution in 1986: "Out of the dark period emerged a politically astute and influential Catholic Church. It capitalized on the presidential candidacy of the popular and charismatic widow, Corazon Aquino. And it was quick to seize the mass mood for uprising and assume the lead role in People Power I" (p. 155). The mass demonstrations that took place on

¹³ It was documented that Ninoy also had inadequate security measures in place, and only had bodyguards who were assigned by Marcos himself.

Epifanio De los Santos Avenue (EDSA) and Camp Aguinaldo on February 22 to 25, 1986 are what finally prompted Marcos and his wife, Imelda to flee the Philippines and head into exile in the state of Hawaii, in the United States.¹⁴ It was from then on that Cory Aquino assumed the role as the next Philippine president, and intended to restore democracy to the country with the assistance of the Catholic Church, who despite its own internal divisions and conflicts, “proved to be the greatest mobilizing and conscientizing force against the Marcos dictatorship” (Ofreneo 1987, p. 335).

Just over a decade after Cory Aquino assumed the position of the Philippines’ 11th president, Joseph “Erap” Estrada—a former actor and the only Filipino president to have previously been involved in the entertainment industry—came into power as the 13th president in 1998 amidst the Asian Financial Crisis. Although Erap’s period of power did not result in martial law, he nonetheless left a legacy of corruption which was even documented in Transparency International’s Global Corruption Report of 2004.¹⁵ In similar fashion to Marcos’ ousting, Erap was also overthrown by a robust opposition composed once again of the common Filipino people, students, “leftist” groups, religious personnel, the military, and Anti-Erap politicians. In 2001, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo replaced him as president after another revolution referred to as “People Power II”. Arroyo served two terms as president, and strategically also aligned her policies with those of the Catholic Church, forming yet another alliance with the institution as Cory Aquino also did for her political strategy. According to Bautista (2010): “The Church-backed ouster of President Joseph Estrada—who prominent Church leaders saw as the personification of an endemically corrupt and immoral political

¹⁴ It is reported that over 2 million Filipinos participated in the rallies, answering Cardinal Sin’s call to the public through Radio Veritas to gather in these designated areas.

¹⁵ Joseph Estrada is listed as one of the top 10 most corrupt leaders in the report, and is reported to have embezzled an estimated \$78 to 80 million US Dollars (Transparency International 2004, p. 13).

culture—was portrayed as an extension of the continuing relevance of the Church as a facilitator of good governance” (2004, p. 33).

Thus, the Philippine Church and members of the CBCP gained political significance after two successful revolutions against corrupt presidential leaders, Marcos and Estrada. The emergence of the Church as a powerful ally of the Filipino people and to both Aquino and Macapagal-Arroyo paved the way for legislation and policies strongly influenced by Catholic teaching and the traditional values of the Church. The establishment of the Philippine Constitution of 1987, for instance, was a result of the religio-political partnership between Cory Aquino’s administration and the Church. And Macapagal-Arroyo is also known to have used the constitutional definitions of “family” and “life” to squander population and reproductive health programmes and legislation that contradicted the Church’s teachings on natural family planning methods.

Although the Church has promoted two separate Catholic leaders and ultimately played key roles in ousting the corrupt administrations of Marcos and Estrada, it is argued that the intentions of overthrowing these administrations were not to the complete benefit of the Filipino people. Rather, participating in both People Power movements and attaching itself to these robust revolutions, was a strategic act to regain relevant standing in civil society. Ofreneo (1987) writes that: “The resurgent activism and grassroots orientation manifested in sustained involvement in mass movements and community organizing may be viewed as a concerted attempt to attain relevance as the only guarantee of institutional survival in an increasingly secular world.” (p. 320). Nonetheless, Church leaders gained power in Philippine politics and in matters that involved the intimate and reproductive lives of its citizens. Cardinal Sin himself was vocal during political elections, and urged faithful followers to not vote for candidates who

“[profess] a godless ideology”, such as those who “advocate divorce or abortion” (Ofreneo 1987, p. 335). The ways in which the Church and members of the CBCP grasped onto the (mutually beneficial) presidential administrations of Aquino and Macapagal-Arroyo, and the key historical revolutions that gave room to their leadership roles, also allowed them to significantly shape reproductive health politics in the years that followed, and the context in which reproductive dilemmas are shaped.

While the Church navigated the political spheres into a position of relevance over the last three to four decades, the Philippines was transforming significantly due to major shifts in the global economy and the economic initiatives put in place to adhere to these shifts. Thus, I return to the events preceding (and during) Marcos’ presidency and martial law, this time with the objective of outlining some of his economic development policies and locating the moments where the Philippines officially became a free trade and labour export zone. It is these economic policies that led to the country’s transition into becoming one of the world’s most important sources of migrant labour, which considerably changed the Philippines’ social and geographical experiences in irreversible ways. Again, these modifications in how intimate and economic life converse with each other and how the global mediates this dialogue is essential to how reproductive dilemmas are formed and discussed in this study.

Macapagal and Marcos Era Economics: Paving the Way for Global Restructuring in the Philippines

The Philippines is no stranger to dispersal, migration, and global trade. I turn however, to some events during the late period of American occupation in the Philippines in an attempt to

trace the country's stories of foreign debt before it shifted its economic focus towards free trade export zones and labour migration programmes. Prior to Philippine independence, the colonial American mission to train Philippine leaders for self-governance only resulted in the "grafting" of a government system onto a context of "highly unequal economic and social power relations and an authoritarian political culture" (Kelly 2000, p. 28). As an example of this claim, the elite landowning families who were already in power since the Spanish colonial era were able to use American ideas of government and democracy in a way that "entrench[ed] their own power" in Philippine society as they did so under Spanish rule (Kelly 2000, p. 28). Colonial legacies and systems of hierarchies since the Spanish and American occupations produced (and reproduced) social inequalities and power structures that only became more embedded in Philippine society through neocolonial economic relationships.

Although free trade agreements with the United States were already in place during the early years of American colonialism, as indicated by the Payne-Aldrich Tariff Act of 1909 and the Underwood-Simmons Tariff Act of 1913 (Kelly 2000, p.26), the direction of the Philippine economy was largely influenced by government leaders in the U.S. even after its "independence" from American occupation in 1946. The Bell Trade Act of 1946 would solidify trade relations between the U.S. and the Philippines for the next twenty-eight years, and allowed the U.S. to have control over "significant areas of the economy" (Kelly 2000, p. 30). As the local elite class began to invest in promising manufacturing enterprises, for example, foreign interests (mostly American) also entered the domestic manufacturing sector to "take advantage of favourable economic opportunities" (Kelly 2000, p. 31).

By the time President Diosdado Macapagal was in power in the early 1960s, however, the Philippine government was under political pressure from both the United States government and

the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to respond to slow economic growth, and to shift away from trade controls. Kelly (2000) also documents the emergence of a class of professional technocrats such as conservative economist Gerardo Sicat, who argued against protectionist and import control policies and supported the depression of wages in order to increase and promote industrial expansion (p. 32). Thus, in addition to the abolition of trade controls, President Macapagal also devalued the Philippine peso (which at the time was at a strong rate of 1 US = 2 PHP) in order to attract more foreign market interest to the country's agricultural export. This strategy was supported by U.S. President Kennedy, and as a result, the Philippines was provided with a 3 hundred million dollar loan by the IMF. These initiatives and transnational agreements between the U.S., the Philippines, and the IMF operated in tandem to deepen the integration of the Philippine economy into global markets, and are thus argued to have marked the "beginning of the Philippines' debt dependence" (Scipes, 1999, p. 5).

However, with a now devalued peso and massive international debt, the Philippine economy fell into a devastating crisis within just three years: businesses went bankrupt, and as the rates of imports increased, exports (particularly agricultural goods) were perilously low. In efforts to lift themselves out of such a calamitous economic state, government leaders turned to neoliberal strategies, including an export-oriented industrial programme (EOI) that would allow foreign corporations to form manufacturing bases in the Philippines (Ofreneo 2013, p. 431). This solution would go on to provide foreign corporations several advantages including obtaining cheaper labour from Filipino citizens, and several tax exemptions.

Even before Marcos was put into power as president, the Philippine economy was in a state of foreign *utang* or debt, with nearly no option but to succumb to the conditions of the new orders of neoliberalism. Scipes (1999) contends however, that President Marcos (elected in

1965) was not yet able to implement these economic strategies due to the “substantial opposition” by members of Congress (p. 6). It was only when Marcos declared his own dictatorship through martial law in 1972 that these economic policies could be put into place and executed without the interference of the clashing protests of his non-supporters. Gerardo Sicat, in fact, eventually became an influential member of Marcos’ economic staff, and his ideas aligned with neoliberal market ideologies that were being implemented elsewhere (Kelly 2000, p. 32). Marcos’ presidential influence on the Philippine economy was based on continual efforts to transform parts of the country into export-led zones: the Bataan peninsula specifically, became an export processing zone (EPZ) and helped to expand the exportation of agricultural products (e.g. sugar), electronic materials, and garments (Floro and Schaefer, p. 88; Kelly 2000, p. 33). In this same period, Marcos’ wife, Imelda, in her capacity as Governor of Metro Manila, was pushing for several large-scale urban projects in an attempt to host high-profile events (e.g. the 1974 Miss Universe beauty pageant) and to establish Manila as a world-class city (Kelly 2000, p. 34).

Peter Krinks (2003) also describes martial law as a turning point for the Philippine economy, which was a period where major economic change occurred in the country. He states, however, that Marcos’ administration formulated several new policies during this time that affected “all sectors of the economy”, but that “sought-after transformation” was achieved only in select areas, while the Philippine economy as a whole “slid into profound crisis” (Krinks 2003, p.17). Economic “growth” under Marcos was uneven in the country, and did not distribute equally across regions and social classes. The Philippines’ histories of colonialism, elitism, political dictatorships, corruption, and global restructuring have all contributed to the largely unequal distributions of wealth and economic growth. This is a reality that is relevant even in

current times—divisions between the wealthy and poor are prominent and visibly evident in Metro Manila, where “uneven” urbanisation and development are characterised by physical and social contrasts.

Marcos’ policies on trade and export were accompanied by structural adjustment policies (SAPs) imposed by the World Bank and the IMF in the 1980s, and were implemented to promote “economic efficiency” across state markets and reconfigure the Philippine economy for debt repayment (Bello 2004, p. 12). By this time, the country’s foreign debt had risen from \$2.7 billion in 1972 to \$20.9 billion (Krinks 2003, p. 42). The SAPs were attended by trade liberalisation, deregulation of market protocol, and the privatisation of industries and services, which are central features of the systems of neoliberalism and economic globalisation that were beginning to reorganise economies in developed and developing regions in this same period.

In their study of global restructuring in the Philippines, Floro and Schaefer (1998) also cite the impact of SAPs on the Philippines’ economic condition, and its role in integrating the country into the globalised systems of free market and free trade. SAPs were indeed, major components of the Philippines’ dramatic economic transition during the early 1980s, and continue to have repercussions on short and long-term economic growth until the present day. Floro and Schaefer further explain that the implementation of SAPs in the Philippines during martial law was especially detrimental, as it coincided with social unrest, political instability, and large-scale corruption (1998, p. 77). Hence, as these programmes were being implemented under the period of martial law, important sectors including sugar trading, construction, and tobacco were being monopolised by Marcos’ team of cronies (Floro and Schaefer 1998, p. 77).

After a combination of different political factors and economic policies including free trade programmes and SAPs, only select industries were doing well while others suffered immensely (especially the agricultural industry, which was hit the hardest after the devaluation of the peso, and suffered after imports of rice were enforced after trade liberalisation). But the Philippine economy under Marcos was already benefitting from the remittance incomes of its Overseas Filipino Contract Workers (OCWs – later to be termed as Overseas Filipino Workers), under the Labor Code of 1974, before the implementation of structural adjustment reforms and conditionalities.¹⁶ After witnessing the shift towards export-growth manufacturing and its potential for economic gain amidst the state's obligation to debt relief, Marcos recognised the unlimited potential of creating export policies for the already existing employment migration of Filipino workers to overseas regions. The creation and implementation of the Marcos administration's Labour Export Policies (LEPs), would promote and facilitate the employment of Filipino citizens abroad, and was at the time, a programme that would temporarily relieve the country's economic stasis. In Marcos' view, the LEPs also helped to address two other serious social problems that required his administration's attention: high rates of unemployment and a population increasing at an alarming rate. Hence, the period of Marcos' leadership marks the beginnings of state-sponsored and state-facilitated labour migration of Filipinos. It is this particular economic strategy that dramatically transformed Philippine social and intimate life in numerous ways and that has shaped the direction of several industries (e.g. telecommunications) in later years as the dynamics of labour migration continued to evolve.

¹⁶ Krinks (2002) cites Article 22 of The Labor Code as stating that, "all Filipino workers were (and still are) required to remit a portion of their foreign exchange earnings to their families, dependants, and/or beneficiaries in the Philippines" (p. 32).

As the Philippine economy grew more reliant on the remittances of its overseas workers, Filipinos themselves took on the roles of their homeland's "national heroes". Such a narrative emerged since Marcos' labour export programmes were accompanied by a nationalist rhetoric that celebrated the Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) as "important to the Philippine economy and national imaginary" (Rodriguez 2002, p. 342). Just one year after the Labor Code was passed in 1974, approximately 36,035 Filipinos left the country to work abroad; by 2012 this number had reached 1,802,031 (although half of this number were rehires) (Lozada 2013). In search of better economic opportunities in order to support themselves and their loved ones with encouragement from state policies over the last few decades, OFWs eventually became the face of economic "success", and "icon[s] of the Philippines' export-oriented development" (Rodriguez 2002, p. 342). And so, since the 1970s, there has been an accelerated and facilitated push of Filipinos to move and work in economies that showcased labour gaps in seafaring, care work, domestic help, and construction (to name just a few industries). With both single and married individuals leaving for overseas employment (at times for a number of years), the configurations of families and intimate partnerships have shifted and experiences of *absences* became all too familiar at home and in the diaspora.

The narratives and national renderings of OFWs as the new "heroes" of the country, of course, functioned to offset the dire realities of overseas mistreatment of Filipino workers as well as the prolonged physical and emotional distance experienced by them and the families they left behind in the Philippines (Gibson et al. 2001; Guevarra 2009; Rodriguez 2002). OFWs have always been a heterogeneous group that includes both males and females as well as professional, skilled workers (e.g. health practitioners and engineers). In many cases, however, they comprise individuals who perform "unskilled" or informal labour in more developed nations (and as

mentioned earlier, most of these jobs are gendered, domestic work). Thus, they are susceptible to racialised, gendered, and class exploitation in their host countries. Rafael (1997) critiques the Philippine government's rhetorical use of "national heroes", positing that it only intends to compensate for the many dismal outcomes of the LEPs and dispersal of OFWs to other nation-states. Referring to the new Philippine economy as the "economy of pity", Rafael contends: "By encoding [OFWs] as national heroes, [the Philippine government has] sought to contain the anxieties attendant on the flow of migrant labour, including the emotional distress over the separation of families and the everyday exploitation of migrants by job contractors, travel agents, and foreign employers" (1997, p. 276). Rafael also laments that as "foreign" sources of "aid" or as necessary bodies of labour, OFWs have come to occupy "ambiguous positions" at home and abroad: "Neither inside nor wholly outside the nation-state, they hover on the edges of its consciousness, rendering its boundaries porous with their dollar-driven comings and goings" (1997, p. 269).

The implementation of the LEPs is without a doubt, one of the Philippines' historical and political incidents that brought about irrevocable changes to labour markets and intimate life, both within its own borders and on the global front. The policies and programmes that allowed Filipinos to be easily recruited to work overseas in contract or temporary positions significantly altered the overseas labour workforce and permeated Filipinos' sense of identities as working, labouring bodies. Moreover, these policies helped to differentiate the Philippines from other labour exporting countries: "Rather uniquely, the Philippine state has played a pivotal role in the intensification of overseas migration through policies that have systematically promoted and encouraged the phenomenon" (Madianou and Miller 2011, p. 458).

Since Marcos' implementation of LEPs and the multiple processes and operations of neoliberal globalisation, OFWs continue to contribute a sizeable amount of remittances back to the Philippines and to the significant growth of the national economy. In 2014, the amount of remittances sent back from around the globe (including Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, Hong Kong, and the United States) surpassed \$20 Billion USD,¹⁷ and the financial input over the last few decades has shaped a national economy that has become "both unmanageable and unimaginable without overseas labour migration" (Aguilar Jr. 2014, p. 6). And while Filipinos have had a "long history of migrations", Rafael (1997) attests that, "it is only in the last twenty-five years that the massive, state-encouraged movements of workers and immigrants have become part of the nation's everyday life" (p. 269).

The contours and dynamics of the national economy also changed considerably over time because of the ways in which "left behind" families and their labouring loved ones from abroad needed to amend gaps in communications and physical absences. Galam (2012), who writes about communication technology strategies used by seafarers and their wives who they often leave behind, states that these women "...know absence very well. Their lives are striated by it. They prepare for and live this absence and its consequences" (p. 224). OFWs, alongside Filipinos who regularly return to the homeland as *balikbayans*, also fulfill important roles as consumers as they simultaneously purchase services designed and targeted towards migrant communities. Such industries and service providers include telecommunications companies (for long-distance calling services), the banking industry (especially money transfer services), education, and real estate (Aguilar Jr., 2014). Bonifacio (2013) even mentions the "return-

¹⁷ October OFW remittances at record high. *Asian Journal*. 16 December 2014. [Online] Available at: <http://asianjournal.com/news/october-ofw-remittances-at-record-high/>

home” residential projects of *balikbayans*, in which new dwellings are built with overseas earnings for eventual retirement, and larger real estate companies in the Philippines have international agencies in place to provide consultation for *balikbayan* communities (p. 215). Indeed, the economic circuits of remittances and consumer trends in the Philippines are constituted by the monetary contributions and spending practices of Filipino migrant workers.

The implementation of LEPs by the Marcos administration has produced incredible effects on the livelihoods of Filipinos, in how they view and experience labour, geography, home, and how they shape national and global economies. And as mentioned earlier, Philippine migration has evolved into a “revolution”, as asserted by Aguilar Jr. (2014). Certain after-effects of labour migration will be explored again in later chapters in relation to reproductive dilemmas (specifically, remittances, transnational families, and globalised intimacies), but prior to those discussions I turn first to how neoliberal restructuring in the Philippines affected gender dynamics in the country. As labour migration certainly became a profitable way for the Philippines to become integrated with neoliberal and global markets, Filipino women in particular were (and continue to be) affected and even exploited in ways that are gendered, racialised, and involve a “downward occupational mobility” (Lindio-McGovern 2007) or “contradictory class mobility” (Parreñas 2001b).

Gender and Neoliberal Economic Policies in the Philippines

The restructuring of the Philippine economy since the 1970s and 1980s had an overwhelming impact on gender dynamics, and on the lives of Filipino women. The new rules which capitalism began operating by on a global level had (and continue to have) detrimental effects on the world’s poorest women. In the past few decades, feminist scholars (see for

example, Parreñas 2001b; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Marchand and Runyan 2011) have explicitly criticised global restructuring and the reliance of transnational corporations on the labour and services of poor women from exploited and developing regions. Neoliberal economic systems are argued to be structured on the basis of racial and gendered hierarchies where the poorest women are placed at the bottom of this economic order and labour system, undervalued by the global markets and yet so central to its operations. Poor, working class women—especially minority women and migrants—thus became the “cheapest and most vulnerable sources of labour” as labour migration continued to gain momentum in the rapidly globalising economy; and the most sought after jobs for such women in developing countries were characterised by “low wages, few benefits, little union representation, and minimal regulation and tend to be part-time, temporary, and highly insecure in nature” (Marchand and Runyan 2001, p. 17).

In relation to the Philippine context, a rich set of feminist scholarship that emerged in the late 1990s and early to mid 2000s has particularly criticised the exploitation of Filipino women who are recruited as cheap labouring bodies and relegated to low-skilled domestic and caregiving work in more developed states (Stasiulis and Bakan 1997; Chang and Groves 2000; Gibson et al. 2001; Parreñas 2001b; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002; Silvey 2004; Pratt 2005). Each of these works highlight how Filipino women have become essential to the economies of the Global North (recruited mainly as domestic workers) and to the Philippines through the remittances they continue earn abroad and send back home. As undervalued workers, Filipino women find themselves in precarious positions within the international labour system—many are exploited, overworked, underpaid, abused, and unprotected by both sending and receiving nations.

The reasons for hiring (or promoting) Filipino women as “cheap” labour are numerous, and go beyond prevalent ideologies of them being “poor, working class” or “vulnerable sources of labour” (Marchand and Runyan 2001, p. 17). The Philippines’ political and economic connections to the U.S. in the postcolonial period largely paved the way to the continued economic exploitation of Filipino citizens. By the time their independence from the Americans was declared, Filipinos were perceived as the “little brown brothers” of their former colonisers—that is, they had similar cultural aspirations but lacked the capability and finesse to be as powerful as their American “superiors” (Wolff 1991). Filipinos were therefore given work opportunities in the U.S, which were further facilitated by LEPs. The relationship between the two countries—although paternalistic and troubled by colonial histories—helped to expose Filipinos to the English language and American culture. The Philippines’ relationship with the U.S. therefore eventually played a large part in how Filipino women became idealised labourers in Western regions—unlike women from other developing regions, they were already accustomed to their roles as subservient, inferior labourers to their Western counterparts and could integrate (or even assimilate) more easily into Western society. Thus, “as part of an increasingly export-oriented development strategy, the Philippines government has continued to market their female nationals as global service providers and to cash in on this 'vital export commodity'” (Chang and Groves 2000, p. 76).

Ligaya Lindio-McGovern’s work, “Neo-liberal Globalization in the Philippines: Its Impact on Filipino Women and Their Forms of Resistance” (2007) serves as a detailed study of neoliberal practices at an international scale and uses the case of the Philippines to explore the central features of economic globalisation. Alongside trade capitalism, deregulation, privatisation, and economic liberalism, Lindio-McGovern discusses labour flexibilisation and

labour export—again, extensions of Marcos’ labour policies in the 1970s—and how they have particularly affected the lives and employment roles of Filipino women. She describes below, how the neoliberal systems of labour and production are also organised around race, class, and citizenship, and locates the positioning of Filipino women within these overlapping hierarchies:

...the concentration of Filipino female export labor in domestic service work reinforces labor segmentation in the host countries based on gender, race/ethnicity, and class. This consequently entrenches a transnational division of female labor where low-wage, low-prestige domestic work is generally assigned to migrant women from poorer countries while their female and male employers engage in formal labor with more prestige, better pay and better working conditions.

(Lindio-McGovern 2007, p. 25)

Both Cynthia Enloe (2001) and Neferti Tadiar (2004) also trace such exploitative capitalist measures back to Marcos’ economic strategies and labour policies, but directly refer to how Filipino women served international markets and foreigners *sexually*. Enloe argues that the Marcos administration capitalised on sexual ideologies of Filipino women, and “used the reputed beauty and generosity of the Filipina woman as ‘natural resources’ to compete in the international tourism market” (2001, p. 38). Tadiar (2004) elaborates on this, and describes how Philippine integration into global markets benefitted from “sexual economies” through the selling of Filipino women’s bodies and sexuality in the process—the nation thus took part in its own “fantasy production” by fulfilling both the economic and sexual fantasies of its neighbouring countries and former colonies. From the emergence of free trade zones, a thriving nightlife and the darker practices of consumerism in Manila’s red-light district, Tadiar links the

surge of sex tourism and prostitution of Filipino women with Marcos' economic policies and how they interact with the interests of international markets:

Free Trade Zones and tourist belts were essential components of the government's 'incentive packages' to attract capital to the Philippines, and thus similar in constitution. Both relied on a predominantly female and wholly feminized labour force...This means not only the selling of women but the feminization and parceling out of the land: in Ermita, the red-light district in Manila, different zones of bars and clubs are owned and primarily patronized by different nationalities, so that one could identify, for example, an Australian strip or a German one, and so forth—a free trade zone which makes Manila into a multinational brothel. Thus one could in all truth declare, "The government is not only selling women to foreigners, but also the sovereignty of the nation itself".

(2004, p. 52)

Accordingly, a surge of Filipino women, who were already viewed in postcolonial narratives as subservient, docile, and compliant servants of the West, were seen as ideal participants of this global labour export/import system as sex workers, domestic workers, and caregivers.

One of the more prominent contradictions to this global labour dynamic however, is the fact that so many of these Filipino women working overseas in unskilled labour, are college educated and trained as skilled professionals. Lindio-McGovern (2007) makes this assertion as well when she discusses this striking inconsistency and refers to the "downward occupational mobility" of Filipino women who find employment in overseas locales: "Women in domestic service work comprise the bulk of Philippine labor export. Many of these women have college degrees and a good portion have professional work experience as teachers and nurses. Thus, they experience downward occupational mobility in the labor-receiving countries" (2007, p. 24).

But this discussion of such challenges in gender (and racial) equality for Filipino women

as labourers in the global neoliberal system does not intend to overshadow other important achievements that have improved their livelihoods. Neither does it intend to overlook how Filipino women practice agency as OFWs or act as “economic activists with many capabilities and capacities to enact social and economic change” (Gibson et al. 2001, p. 377). Bonifacio (2013) even explores the “vested interests” of Filipino women in labour migration arrangements, largely due to the economic benefits that they and their families receive. She asserts that:

cross-border movements and interactions between spaces of belonging among Filipino women, between the Philippines and Canada (or any other country of residence), provide some sort of benefit both to individuals and to the people or communities they associate with. I hold the view that migrants have a vested interest in continuous participation in transnational ventures, especially between home country and host country, for the food of the families they have left behind or for other purposes.

(Bonifacio 2013, p. 210)

Economic and political changes in the Philippines have also impacted upon gender equality for Filipino women in positive ways. Although there still exist current problems of gender discrimination that affect women’s status and expected roles in Philippine society, The Alan Guttmacher Institute found that Filipino women’s lives have changed rapidly since the early 1990s, and these changes are reflected in the shifting of women’s living situations due to rising levels of educational attainment and paid labour opportunities. The institute found for example, that from 1970 to 2000, Filipino women living in urban areas increased by 79%, which is a higher pace than the worldwide average rate of 27% (The Alan Guttmacher Institute 2003, p. 2).

Moreover, the World Economic Forum's 2011 report on the "Global Gender Gap" has ranked the Philippines as 9th in the world (out of 135 countries), based on the categories of "educational attainment", "health and survival", "economic participation and opportunity", and "political empowerment" (Remo 2014). Reconfigurations of traditional gender dynamics—specifically of women's domestic responsibilities in the household and their primary roles as mothers and caretakers within the family structure are also being challenged by new opportunities for women in the workforce at local and international levels alongside higher rates of educational attainment and participation in government and politics. These transitions into "modern" or urban lifestyles have unsurprisingly resulted in the desire for fewer children.

Labour export policies implemented by the Marcos government in the 1970s have therefore led to radical changes to the Philippine economy, and also to rearrangements of migration, labour, and gendered experiences in the country and abroad. Global restructuring and the policies that accompany these processes have dispersed Filipinos on a large-scale—as thousands continue to transfer overseas to find economic opportunity and hope, they simultaneously leave behind their loved ones. Physical closeness and absence are experienced differently in the country, since the effects of the global have become embedded with everyday life. Intimacies have become globalised in the Philippines over the years since economic policies such as the LEPs were executed.

But again, individual dilemmas regarding reproduction are produced in a context shaped by restrictions imposed by religious ideology and state powers as well as the ways in which intimate life has been transformed by globalised economies. The selective religious, political, and economic histories that I have outlined here come together in the discussion below, as I

return to the topic of the RH Law and the debates and obstacles that emerged during its complicated legislative journey.

Religion and State Powers - Impacts on Reproductive Politics in the Philippines

An influential Church and a strong base of Catholic followers has only given the conservative CBCP considerable weight and power in matters of policy and legislation, especially in regards to the RH Law. But, prior to the events of the Power Power Revolution in 1986, President Marcos had already incorporated family planning and population management policies into his economic development programme, led and informed by his elite group of technocrats. Indeed, the labour export policies that were established under Marcos' administration were not the only programmes that reshaped the Filipino family unit. As Abinales and Amoroso (2005) note, Marcos, "who strengthened the state in many other ways, was also the first modern president to attempt to shape the family—a basic component of society that had hitherto been subject to Church leadership" (p. 295).

In one of his speeches documented and published by the journal, *Population and Development Review* in 1982, Marcos addresses his controversial position on modern family planning, which became a crucial component to his 5-year development strategy. He cites the 1973 Constitution, which was established under his own leadership, and which anchors his support for implementing family planning programs and promoting smaller sized families:

This strategy gives substance and form to the spirit of our new Constitution, which the Filipino people ratified in 1973. I wonder if you are aware of the fact that there is a provision in the Constitution pertaining to the management of population levels. I am referring in particular to a provision of this basic law, which says: "It shall be the

responsibility of the state to achieve and maintain population levels most conducive to the national welfare.” Now that is a constitutional provision. I wonder how many nations in the world have a provision of a similar nature.

(Marcos 1982, p. 226)

Shortly after the first People Power Revolution and in the spirit of re-establishing Philippine democracy, President Cory Aquino sought to write a new constitution and to abolish the Marcos constitution of 1973. In doing this, she turned to her Catholic advisors in penning the document. Father Joaquin Bernas, however, had already drafted the “Freedom Constitution” at President Aquino’s request, which was the governing document before the 1987 Constitution was finally written (Shirley 2004, p. 89). It is also noted that Aquino’s committee of advisors comprised so many high-ranking members of the Church and clergy. Shirley directs us to this detail, noting that, “not since the days of the Commonwealth Constitution had the makeup of the drafters almost guaranteed a document that would be favourable to the Church’s aims and goals” (2004, p. 89).

This very document, the 1987 Philippine Constitution, is what continues to govern the country’s attitudes and legislation on matters regarding family planning and reproductive health and rights. As previously stated, the constitution firmly criminalises abortion from the time of conception, and pronounces that the state shall protect the life of the mother and her unborn child (Article II, Section 12). Apart from the social issues of abortion and divorce being criminalised in this reformed constitution, the interests of the Church being addressed by the state were also reflected in the “non-taxation” of its properties in the country, as well as the implementation of religious instruction in public schools (Ofreneo 1987, p. 331).

While Marcos's population development programmes also opposed abortion, they promoted modern family planning methods using a "noncoercive approach" that would "[draw] people to the movement for responsible parenthood" (Marcos 1982, pp. 227). It is an approach that closely resembles the mandates of the current RH Law, and similarly drew opposition from members of the Philippine Catholic Church. As the country's first family planning programme, it also benefited from "the Church being 'deeply divided on how to protect its own interests and continue to have the influence it thought it ought to over the country'" (Abinales and Amoroso 2005, p. 296). Marcos explicates further:

While we deliver information and services on what our policy-makers consider as acceptable methods of contraception, we continue to respect and safeguard the right of every human couple to determine the size of its family and to choose for itself the method that conforms to its moral and religious belief. We have adopted the policy of choice by conscience. We also remain firmly against abortion, despite what seems to be a growing trend in its favor in some other parts of the world.

(Marcos 1982, p. 227)

Indeed, Cory Aquino's presidency symbolised both a political and religious departure from Marcos' leadership, as it sought to redefine and constitutionalise the Filipino family unit through the lens and vision of the Church. But not all religious leaders or personnel were content with how members of the Church leadership were permeating Catholic doctrine in constitutional matters. Ofreneo (1987) offers the example of Christine Tan, who was herself, a member of the Constitutional Commission (which collectively drafted the new constitution). According to Ofreneo, Tan declared her disapproval of how the bishops were "[using] their influence on matters directly serving Church interests but never on those benefiting the masses", and who also

endorsed the new constitution “with grave hesitation” (1987, p. 331). Nonetheless, the partnership between President Cory Aquino and the Church was built in an era of dictatorship and legendary revolt, and reaffirmed the Church’s place in Philippine politics and in matters of how Filipinos should be planning their families. These crucial sections about family, life, and abortion in the constitution have directly impeded the possibility of a comprehensive reproductive health law until the years 2012 to 2014, and provided solid legislative support to the “pro life” groups who actively opposed the RH Law’s passing.

The moral issues of life, death, abortion, and the traditional Filipino family unit continued to be central topics presented in debates about population and reproductive rights that resulted after the first drafts of the bill were introduced at the House of Congress in the mid 1990s. This of course, was the same era in which the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo took place in 1994, and when the United Nations (UN) Fourth World Conference on Women took place in Beijing just one year later in 1995. Jane H. Bayes and Nayereh Tohidi (2001) discuss the Beijing Conference and describe how this large-scale event differentiated from the others that preceded it, asserting that it was “a more action-oriented conference, with practical solutions and pragmatic compromises overriding theory and ideology” (2001, p. 1). The conference addressed and provided strategic plans of action for women’s issues in regards to areas of conflict, education, poverty, and health care (including HIV/AIDS, and sexual and reproductive health issues).

After the ICPD in Cairo and the Beijing Conference, the international community began to re-think reproduction and population management from a conceptual framework that centred on women and maternal health. That is, there was a key ideological shift towards women’s reproductive *rights*, with accompanying policy recommendations that offered practical

suggestions on how to improve women's reproductive rights in both the developed and developing world. Jamir N. Ocampo (2014) also observes this shift in his piece about reproductive health policy in the Philippines: "...the RH framework is a human-rights based approach that puts the state of reproductive health and reproductive rights at the center of policy interventions, and women as its central focus of concern. Such a framework for RH treats the enjoyment of reproductive rights as an end in itself rather than an intended means in achieving larger demographic goals" (p. 121).

The reactions against the Cairo and Beijing conferences occurred on a global scale. As countries began to think strategically about how to fulfill development goals on both population management and reproductive health and rights, the world's major religions also came together to take a unified stance against these international initiatives. Thus, with issues on reproductive rights on the platforms of developing and developing nations, including concerns around women's sexuality and the right to abortion, Bayes and Tohidi (2001) also discuss the international, inter-faith alliance that was initiated by the Vatican. Catholic and Muslim delegations came together in response to these new development initiatives and fused into a collective as a way to position themselves against the provisions outlined in the Beijing Conference's report ("Platform for Action"), which called for the recognition and implementation of women's rights. With the rights of women now being addressed at such a high-level conference only one year after the ICPD in Cairo, the Holy See recognised the importance of a unified and public statement against sexual and reproductive rights, especially on the rights to abortion, which would put "the future of humanity" at stake (Cowell 1994).

Thus, within the same time frame, Pope John Paul II released his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (translated as "The Gospel of Life") in 1995, which defined the position of the Catholic

Church on the sanctity of human life, and its rejection of any laws or procedures that threatened it—including abortion, euthanasia, and the death penalty. In the encyclical, the Pope expressed the anxieties being felt by other religious institutions in this specific moment and context, where the transecting issues of population management, women’s rights, and reproductive justice were being attended to on the global stage and which were concurrently challenging the traditional teachings of the Church. *Evangelium Vitae*, which to this day serves as a guiding document for the Catholic Church, re-emphasised the institution’s unyielding position against contraception and abortifacients:

Indeed, the pro-abortion culture is especially strong precisely where the Church's teaching on contraception is rejected. Certainly, from the moral point of view contraception and abortion are specifically different evils: the former contradicts the full truth of the sexual act as the proper expression of conjugal love, while the latter destroys the life of a human being; the former is opposed to the virtue of chastity in marriage, the latter is opposed to the virtue of justice and directly violates the divine commandment “You shall not kill”.

(1995, p. 14)

Accompanying these reiterations of “pro life” views, Pope John Paul II also warned of a looming societal mentality that directly impends the sanctity and value of human life. He referred to the international development initiatives on population management and reproductive rights as a “veritable culture of death”, a global shift in attitudes on the sanctity of life that Christians around the world needed to address and ultimately, defy: “We are confronted by...a veritable structure of sin...a veritable culture of death...a war of the powerful against the weak...a ‘conspiracy against life’. Enormous sums of money have been invested...in the

production of pharmaceutical products which make it possible to kill the fetus in the mother's womb" (*Evangelium Vitae* 1995, p. 13).

As a Catholic-Muslim alliance was being formed overseas in response to these international conferences on population management and women's reproductive rights, the CBCP was also beginning to respond to these global initiatives and were compelled to tackle the challenges they were posing to the dominantly Catholic Philippines. At this particular moment, President Fidel V. Ramos, a protestant who Archbishop Cardinal Sin did not favour to be in leadership, was seeking to implement programming that addressed population management and reproductive rights concerns. The ICPD in Cairo in particular had already shaken up conservative Catholics in the Philippines and incited a strong response from "pro life" groups, who rallied against the ICPD's initiatives for suggesting a "pro-abortion" stance (Youngblood 1998, p.13). But Cardinal Sin was especially vocal against Ramos' family planning programme, which he pronounced to be "in the clutches of 'global forces' out to 'destroy the family'" (Youngblood 1998, p.13). Since President Ramos' election in May 1992, Youngblood (1998) argues, the actions and statements of the CBCP including Archbishop Cardinal Sin have "amounted to a declaration of war on artificial means of birth control" (p. 16). With the life of the unborn child bound to the protection of the state as written in the 1987 constitution, any legislation and programming that would improve women's reproductive rights were seen as an attack on the Filipino family and nation by the Church and the faithful communities that witnessed its rise to importance through the revolts of 1986.

Alongside national efforts and strategies to address the growing population's reproductive health needs, were efforts on the part of the CBCP to emphasise the position of the Vatican against reproductive rights and to make clear that they shared this inflexible stance. In

this case, Pope John Paul II's warning of a "culture of death" did not just resonate heavily with the CBCP, but was even appropriated in their political campaigning against the RH Law. As a reminder to the reader, the word "death" was transformed into an acronym to represent other perceived threats to Filipino society, which are considered to be: divorce, euthanasia, abortion, trans-sexuality, and homosexuality (Bautista, 2010, p. 37). The acronym went on to become popularly employed by "pro life" groups and Filipino bishops throughout the years that the different versions of the RH legislation were being debated at the House of Representatives.

After Ramos and Estrada's terms and presidents, Macapagal-Arroyo's administration also continued to oversee the implementation of Catholic values in policies regarding population management and family planning. Following Cory Aquino's own religious views on the sanctity of life and family, Macapagal-Arroyo effectively reduced and restricted access to modern contraceptives early in her first term. A few years later in 2003, Arroyo dismissed the Reproductive Health Care Act and referred to it as "the abortion bill", even though the bill clearly acknowledged that abortion in the state is completely illegal.¹⁸

Ruiz-Austria (2004), who examines the legislative challenges of passing the earlier version of the (then) RH Bill, also provides context to Macapagal-Arroyo's management of reproductive policies. Essentially, these political strategies were intertwined with her administration's loyalty or *utang* ("debt") to the Catholic Church. According to Ruiz-Austria, Macapagal-Arroyo's administration began adopting a series of policies that restricted Filipinos' access to modern contraceptives, not only because these policies reflected her own Catholic

¹⁸ In her State of the Nation address in July 2003, President Arroyo vowed to veto any reproductive health bill. However, the bill only establishes the integration of post-abortion care into the health services and sets standards for humane treatment in public hospitals of women with complications from unsafe abortions (Ruiz-Austria 2004, p. 99).

faith, but because she “[acknowledged] a debt of gratitude to the Catholic church” for sponsoring her in a similar fashion to how they sponsored the presidency of Cory Aquino (2004, p. 98).

As early as the 1970s, modern contraception has been available in the Philippines and was primarily funded by the United States government as a way to support population management and economic development initiatives. After the Cairo and Beijing Conferences however, the focal shift towards reproductive *rights* only made the issue more controversial, specifically for the reasons mentioned above, which pertain to significant clashes between conservative religious powers and the international community’s reproductive health agenda. On a practical level, it was also uncertain that funding for modern contraceptives and family planning services from international agencies, particularly USAID, would continue in the long-run to ensure the provision of such services to the Philippines. Additionally, even though family planning and reproductive services were largely made possible from USAID’s support and executed by women’s health organisations such as LIKHAAN, the distribution of these services remained uneven and often excluded the poorest women. According to a report by LIKHAAN and the Guttmacher Institute, poor Filipino women face several local barriers in obtaining family planning information and modern contraceptives including “costs, poor quality services, lack of awareness or of access to a source of contraceptive care, and lack of awareness of methods” (2010, p. 1).

Moreover, with neoliberal frameworks shaping global economies by de-emphasising the role of the state, other sectors including the health sector, were changing the ways they operated and provided services to the public. Demeterio-Melgar (1999) documents how global restructuring worsened the Philippine health care system, particularly around the time of the Asian Financial Crisis. She cites how the privatisation of the drug industry gave pharmaceutical

companies monopolising powers over markets, resulting in the limited access to medications by poor Filipinos. Furthermore, she discusses the problem of the widespread outflow of Philippine medical professionals, who were finding opportunities (contractual or otherwise) in developed states as the labour migration of Filipinos continued to increase.

Rama Lakshminarayanan (2003) explores how decentralisation processes in the Philippines created more inconsistencies in reproductive and family planning services as more responsibilities were extended to Local Government Units (LGUs), with the intention to provide services based on the local needs of each *barangay* (subdivision or village). Prior to decentralised health care reforms, the delivery of health services was primarily managed and budgeted by the DoH. After the Local Government Code was passed in 1991, LGUs—which are still scattered and spread out across the country—began to deal with different budget allocations and experience difficulties training its local representatives, managers, and health personnel. Furthermore, they inconsistently prioritised (or under-prioritised) women’s reproductive or maternal health needs: “The lack of coordination between national government and local government spending for health has meant under-spending on some priority health services essential to women’s health” (Lakshminarayanan 2003, p. 100). Approximately 3.45% of the national budget that was reserved for health in 1980-1985 was reduced to 2% by 1993 as other cost-cutting measures were also put into place during this period (Subramaniam 1999, p. 146).

As economic globalisation has played a large part in the insufficient delivery of reproductive health services to Filipinos through processes such as privatisation and decentralisation, Rosalinda Pineda Ofreneo (2010), therefore recognises the inseparable link between economic justice and reproductive justice for poor Filipino women and families. She states below:

Similar to the discourse on human rights which are invested with inalienability and indivisibility, economic and reproductive justice are two sides of the same coin for women in the informal economy. Without economic justice, women cannot access services necessary for the attainment of optimum health. Without reproductive justice, women in poverty will neither be free nor able to work, since they will be immobilized and saddled by multiple burdens and too many children, and will be too tired, too weak, or too vulnerable to sickness to engage in productive employment.

(Ofreneo, 2010, p. 22)

Thus, the country needed legislation that would *guarantee* access to a wide-range of reproductive services for all Filipino men and women on a national scale, with sections of the federal budget reserved specifically for the provision of these services. The Philippines required a federal law that mandated reproductive services to the Filipino people, and one that could not be bypassed by local government authorities.¹⁹

Reproductive Health Legislation in the Philippines

As a course of action and as a response to the reproductive needs of Filipinos, Representative Angara-Castillo filed the first RH Bill in the Philippines during the 12th Congress in 2001. The bill mandated full access to modern contraceptives for Filipinos, and was not framed to focus solely on population management strategies for the country. Again, as a result of the international conferences that took place in both Cairo and Beijing, women's reproductive rights gained local and global attention, and maternal and reproductive health became centralised

¹⁹According to Ruiz-Austria (2004), USAID's phase-out plan began in 2004, and Local Government Units (LGUs) were encouraged to take on responsibility of the provision of reproductive and family planning services. Many LGUs, however, did not execute these responsibilities in the absence of a national law or policies on reproductive health in place at the time (p.99).

issues wherever population management was also a concern. This early version of the bill was referred to as “The Reproductive Health Care Agenda Act of 2001” or House Bill 4110 (Ocampo 2014, p. 121). The filing of this bill took place shortly after Jose “Lito” Atienza, the mayor of Manila, prohibited local health centres and hospitals from providing modern or “artificial” contraceptives to its already populous district in 2000 (Parmanand 2014, p. 70). In his controversial Executive Order (EO), Mayor Atienza stated the following for the city of Manila: “...the City promotes responsible parenthood and upholds natural family planning not just as a method but as a way of self-awareness in promoting the culture of life while discouraging the use of artificial methods of contraception like condoms, pills, intrauterine devices, surgical sterilization, and other” (Executive Order No. 003, 2000).

This of course, was viewed as recoil against the Beijing Conference, and as it is in most other contexts, motivated by religious ideologies. Unsurprisingly, the negative after-effects of the EO in the dense zones of Manila affected poor Filipino women the most. The lack of access to modern contraceptives including female sterilisation, oral contraceptive pills, and intrauterine devices (IUDs) greatly affected Manila’s population where unwanted pregnancies and illegal abortions were already too common.²⁰ Based on the report “Imposing Misery: The Impact of Manila’s Contraception Ban on Women and Families” (2007), nearly half of all pregnancies in the Philippines are unwanted, with the poorest women reporting to have two children more than their desired amount (p. 24).

Since the time that the first bill was filed, the CBCP’s views against RH legislation have been unfaltering and their methods of publicly opposing reproductive health access have only

²⁰ The Centre for Reproductive Rights reported that Manila was “a city of more than 1.5 million, with the highest population density of any major city in the world, more than half a million women are of childbearing age.” See: *Imposing Misery: The Impact of Manila’s Contraception Ban on Women and Families* (2007), p. 24.

deepened the religious and political fault lines between “pro” and “anti” RH groups. Faithful communities strategically punished or patronised by their religious leaders if they publicly supported RH legislation. Rosemary Radford Ruether (2008), for instance, documents the moment the CBCP announced that they would deny baptism, communion, confirmation, weddings, or burials to Filipinos who supported contraception and reproductive health access; some priests were even reported to have obtained lists of women who had IUDs inserted, and instructed them to have the devices removed (p. 190).

There were also direct reactions against policymakers themselves by high-level religious representatives. Raffina and Cornelio (2009), for example, note how an archbishop in the Southern Philippines ordered his priests to deny Holy Communion to politicians who supported the RH Law, an order that was approved by the president of the CBCP himself (p. 790). Indeed, religious leaders and the CBCP took great measures against reproductive health legislation, and used their own authority and influence to reprimand individuals in politics and local communities who showed any support for the RH Law. The introduction of RH legislation in the country and the shift of international and local concern towards women’s health and reproductive measures were met with rigid and embittered responses by the Philippines’ Catholic authorities and conservative “pro life” communities.

Since the first RH Bill was filed over thirteen years ago, more than ten other bills were filed at the House of Representatives, and eight bills were filed at the Senate level. After numerous amendments and debates between lawmakers (and even Catholic bishops, who were present at several House debates), “The Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012” was finally passed and signed by President Benigno Aquino in December 2012. Referring back to Ocampo’s (2014) article, various actors and leadership changes played significant roles

in the RH legislative history. These included the Reproductive Health Alliance Network (RHAN) Coalition and The Interfaith Partnership for the Promotion of Responsible Parenthood, which are both supported by strong women's rights coalitions and advocates in the Philippines. From the House of Representatives, notable supporters of RH legislation included party representatives Edcel Lagman, Risa Hontiveros, and Janette Garin. From the side of the opposition, prominent "pro life" coalitions alongside the CBCP were supported by an inter-faith alliance that was internationally organised.

Still, even after the Supreme Court finally declared the RH Law constitutional nearly one year after it was first halted by the Status Quo Ante Order (SQAQO), several of the law's provisions were struck down on the grounds that they were considered unconstitutional. Unsurprisingly, this decision appealed to conservative "pro life" groups (who oppose the law entirely), and preserved the right of private hospitals and faith-based clinics to *not* refer their patients to other facilities that offered reproductive services. The original provision in the law (Section 7) would have given the government authority to penalise these health care institutions if they refused to assist their patients or refer them to alternative service providers. Such services included care for women who required emergency abortions, as well as care for women who already opted to terminate their pregnancies illegally. Mark Merueñas of *GMA News* (2014) summarises other provisions that were struck down by the Philippine Supreme Court:

- penalties for health care providers who fail to disseminate RH information or refer patients not in an emergency and life threatening case to another health care service provider, regardless of his or her religious beliefs;
- punishment for government health workers who refuse to support RH programs or provide RH services to patients, regardless of his or her religious beliefs;

- penalties for health service providers that require parental consent from minor patients who are not in an emergency or serious situation;
- allowing a married individual, not in an emergency or life-threatening case... to undergo reproductive health procedures without the consent of the spouse²¹

The passing of the RH Law is unquestionably a significant victory for poor Filipino women and the country's RH advocates. However, there remain challenges in implementing the law as suggested by how these provisions were rejected by the Supreme Court. Married individuals require consent from spouses in order to undergo basic reproductive health procedures, and healthcare practitioners can still deny reproductive or family planning assistance to their patients due to their faith and religious beliefs. Today's version of the RH Law still excludes some of the reproductive needs of single women and men as well as adolescents, in addition to the many women who are in unsatisfying marriages but do not have the means or resources to annul their unions.²² In a country such as the Philippines, the Catholic faith and the advocacy of "pro life" groups continue to pose challenges to reproductive health rights and to women's health issues and needs. For the many who side with the CBCP and the conservative faith groups, the RH Law is less about the needs of women, however, and more so about the moral and social struggles between the values of *life* or *death* in the Philippines.

Conclusion

²¹ Merueñas, M. SC says RH Law constitutional except for some provisions. *GMA News Online*. 8 April 2014. [Online] Available at: <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/355961/news/nation/sc-says-rh-law-constitutional-except-for-some-provisions>

²² The Philippines is only country where divorce is not legally recognised (Santos 2015).

Although the history of the RH legislation spans over a decade and comprises different social, political, and structural factors, it is critical to locate the Philippine Church's trajectory into political significance as a way to further understand the contemporary context in which reproductive dilemmas are formed at the micro level. We see how the institution played a tremendous role in bringing down corrupt leaders and elevating their successors to presidential leadership through revolt and revolution. The Church has cemented itself on the political foundation of the Philippines and continues to impact the legislative direction of any laws that disrupt not only the 1987 Philippine Constitution, but also the social and moral values that uphold the Philippine nation and state.

As seen with the Aquino and Macapagal-Arroyo administrations (and even during Ramos' presidency), the promotion of Catholic values, including the unfaltering and adamant rejection of modern family planning methods and alternative reproductive options, served well to elevate the political candidates to higher positions of power—or in Ramos' case, cause tension between Church and government. Such allegiances, between “pro life” politicians and the Church, are still prevalent in contemporary times and have distinctly hindered the RH Law's path into signage over the last 13 years.²³ In a complex and paternalistic fashion, the Church has been instrumental in liberating its devout followers from the corruption and oppression of the country's former dictators, but remains adamant in dictating the more personal and intimate aspects of Filipino's decision-making regarding sex, sexuality, and family planning as well as the reproductive rights of women.

²³ Senators such as Vicente “Tito” Castelo Sotto III, Gregorio Honasa, and Aquilino Pimentel III have sided with the CBCP on the issue of the RH Law, and have voted against its passing at Senate hearings.

On the other hand, the beginnings of the Philippines' transition into a globalised labour migrant economy are also explored in this chapter. As a strategy to assuage deep foreign debt, Filipinos became overseas labourers through labour export policies (LEPs), which also transformed *gendered* economies at home and abroad. Both of these important histories are intertwined and collide on the issue of reproductive health politics. We see how *access* to reproductive health is affected by religious discourses on natural family planning (e.g. the example of the contraceptive ban in Manila in 2000), and by neoliberal impositions on effective service delivery by LGUs in Filipino *barangays*. These coinciding trajectories—the political narrative of the Philippine Catholic Church and the economic transformation of the country via LEPs—both play significant roles in shaping the contemporary climate in which reproductive dilemmas are produced. The split between the Church's discourses and the reproductive needs of women clashes in a landscape where the intimate details of people's private lives have become hyper-globalised, and deeply imprinted by economic development policies.

Thus, the reason for exploring both the trajectories of the Church's political history since Marcos' presidency as well as the integration of the Philippine economy in the global markets through LEPs is part of an attempt to convey the context—religious, political, and economic—that has constructed the kinds of reproductive dilemmas that I draw out in this research. On one hand, reproduction is a political act and decision since it is attached to notions of nation, morality, and gendered roles. It is also guided by religious doctrine, and in the case of the Philippines, such doctrine is embedded in state constitutions and laws, and the entwined relationship between the Church and state have created real material barriers to reproductive health access for Filipinos. But global restructuring and labour migration have also added an important dimension to consider in this exploration of reproductive dilemmas. Indeed, neoliberal

processes such as decentralisation and privatisation in the health sector have obstructed the provision of reproductive services to poor communities in the Philippines. But furthermore, the state-sponsored LEPs have reconfigured intimate life and have drastically altered how Filipinos experience, make decisions, and think about reproduction.

In the following chapter then, I begin to explore the stories and narratives of individuals in Metro Manila and Cavite that articulate reproductive dilemmas and how they are not only shaped by internal conflicts with faith and religion, but how they are in constant dialogue with the global as well. The repercussions of the global and how they intertwine with and have reshaped intimate life in the Philippines also undermine the binary ways that the RH debate has been presented in public discourses. As life in these regions has changed physically and spatially, experiences and dilemmas with reproduction also show us the ambiguity and troubled grey areas between dichotomous portrayals of reproductive choices, and the disarrayed aspects of such dilemmas.

Chapter 3: Disrupting Binaries – Faith, Gender, and Neoliberalism in Reproductive Dilemmas

The intertwining trajectories of President Marcos' policies on labour export migration together with the increased involvement of the Catholic Church in Philippine politics have transformed social life in the country in ways that add complexity and nuance in reproductive politics and dilemmas. With the Church and the CBCP in influential political positions and a rapidly changing socio-economic landscape—one that is fraught with dispersal and globalised intimacies—individual reproductive dilemmas are both produced and complicated by faith,

gender dynamics, and the effects of the economic. Such dilemmas and various tensions are laid out and explored below.

This chapter begins with ethnographic accounts during the time that I was already settled in Quezon City, and in the middle of conducting semi-structured interviews around Metro Manila. Most of the conversations here are recorded interviews pieced together and arranged thematically to make sense of the contentious discursive environment of reproductive politics. Other conversations and moments of insight occurred in casual, haphazard instants, and were documented the same day they took place. It is by using this unstructured method at times in the field that allowed for such conversations about reproduction and intimacy to take place.

I go on to outline a few specific events of the RH Law debate before and after it was signed into law, including the academic debate on Catholicism between “pro RH” faculty from Ateneo de Manila University and international theologians in 2008, and local campaigns by “pro life” groups that gained attention from national media outlets prior to the 2013 May Elections. Both examples provide a depiction of the local contexts, and imagery of the dichotomies of the RH debate. Individual responses to such polemics in this chapter reveal the *hesitancies*, deep affectations, and internal conflicts caused by being caught up in and between robust religious, political, and social factors.

The narratives in this chapter uncover the particularities of religious pluralism in the face of binary discourses—Fr. John for instance, shares his own negotiations with religious teachings on reproduction and how some of his beliefs conflict with his authority as a religious leader. Bea, an advocate for a “pro RH” faith-based NGO, describes her work in supporting reproductive health as a form of “prayer”. It is challenging to her then, to confront the attitudes of those who view her commitment to her faith as inauthentic.

In regards to gender norms and dynamics, a university instructor called Charles dismantles the “pro life” stance by addressing his observations of “machismo” in Filipino society. “Machismo” (or masculinity), alongside the phenomena of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) and transnational families brought about by labour migration, reveals incongruities in conservative “pro life” arguments against reproductive health. But, locating the ambiguities and contradictions in these narratives is a feminist exercise in itself, as these individuals from around Metro Manila reject binary discourses altogether.

Finally, I examine how the concepts and rhetoric of neoliberalism have become embedded and underpin individual sentiments towards reproduction. As my interviewees reveal, ideas of *responsibility* and *self-discipline* (or the *masipag*, which I return to again in Chapter 5) guide “pro life” views in a context where both hopes for economic success and religious tradition are inescapable. The entwinement of market rationale in ideas about reproduction and reproductive choices also convey how “intimate economies” operate in these areas in the Philippines and in the RH debate.

“Liberation” from the Church – Reminiscing on the Passing of the RH Law

In early March 2013, supporters of the reproductive health legislation were still celebrating its passage. Simultaneously, media outlets in the Philippines were reporting Pope Benedict XVI’s resignation, which was first announced on February 11, 2013 (Hada and Pearson 2013). It was evident that at this moment, the conservative “pro life” groups were uneasy at these two events, as both undermined the Catholic foundation that held up Philippine society for so long. The connection that the conservative groups have with the Vatican has been substantial

for many years, with Pope John Paul II's *Evangelium Vitae* (1995) being a prominent and important document that has influenced and solidified the arguments of RH opponents since the law's introduction in the early 2000s. Knowing this, I was aware that the events occurring on the other side of the globe—at the home base of the Vatican itself—was still somewhat significant to the Philippines and to the country's relationship with Church leadership.

This realisation became clearer the day I met my volunteer contact in Miriam College, located only a short walking distance from my temporary residence on Katipunan Avenue in Quezon City. The short hours that I had reserved for this meeting were for a volunteer assignment that I considered to be separate from my field research at the time. Yet, it was during these same hours that I was given the opportunity to meet a remarkable and prominent woman who was involved in Philippine reproductive politics back in the 1990s.

My meeting with my volunteer contact, Lucia, was already foiled as I waited in her office for approximately 15 minutes before she finally arrived, hurried and disheveled. Apologising for her tardiness, Lucia explained that she had been called into another meeting by one of the faculty members and was unable to leave the conversation to make our appointment on time. When we discuss the details of the volunteer project and after I disclose my own research interests and fieldwork goals, Lucia immediately invites me to speak to this same faculty member, who happens to have been involved with one of the first versions of the RH Bill. Lucia leads me over to another area of the college campus, where the Women and Gender Institute is located. After walking through the crowds of young female students who are in-between their classes, I am introduced to Lisa, who is sitting in the staff room, relaxed and in a conversational mood. Lucia is kind enough to bring me into the room with her, and mentions that I am conducting my field research on reproductive decisions and views on the RH Law.

Lisa takes interest in my research immediately after our mutual introduction, and asks me if I have read any of the recent transcripts of the Senate hearings that took place in December, shortly before the bill was eventually signed into law. “Not yet”, I reply. This signals her to begin telling me excitedly about Senator Pia Cayetano’s audacity when she challenged Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile’s proposal to delete the descriptions of sex as “safe and satisfying” and “pleasurable” in the legislation’s official mandates (Bordadora 2012). Cayetano’s fervent rejection of Enrile’s proposed amendments was proven effective when it was later revealed that Senate votes favouring her appeal outnumbered those that sided with Enrile. Lisa is jubilant as she refers to this recent incident and tells me that the older, male Senators were so taken aback and visibly uncomfortable at Cayetano’s confrontations and at the concept of “satisfying” sex for Filipino women. She (along with Senator Cayetano) is correct in pointing out that the issue of contestation regarding the RH Bill—apart from the sacredness of life and the institution of the Filipino family—is women’s sexuality and sexual gratification. In the predominantly Roman Catholic country, these issues remain controversial and even taboo, as the conservatism and pious influence of the Catholic Church has permeated Philippine society, politics, and legislation.

I then discover, mid-conversation, that Lisa is no ordinary individual or faculty member at Miriam College. She is a former Senator herself, who personally attended the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo and was also a co-drafter of one of the earlier versions of a bill on population management (“Integrated Population and Development Act of 1999” or House Bill 8110 filed on August 16, 1999). During this serendipitous, informal meeting with Lisa, I am stunned at her astute observations about what the December 2012 passing of the RH Bill potentially signified for the Filipino people.

On both the RH Law's passing and on Pope Benedict XVI's resignation, Lisa is convinced that something larger is happening to (and for) the Philippine people, and that these events somehow reflect or signify a transition in the relationship between the Philippine Church and the state. Lisa sternly says to me that these two meaningful events indicate that "times are changing", and suggest that Filipinos are "letting go of the institutions that had a hold on them". I am unprepared as Lisa continues to speak, and I hurriedly search for a pen and paper to write down her words and her reflections. Her insights come from specialised and first-hand experience with the complicatedness of high-level Philippine politics and the legislative hurdles at the Senate level. Lucia helps me find tools for writing down Lisa's quick insights, and Lisa continues to speak uninterrupted and effortlessly as both Lucia and myself take the moment in and allow her the silence and the space to speak.

Lisa suggests that the Church is finally "realising it has less power over the nation", and that the RH Law is not simply legislation on family planning, but rather, is a symbol of Filipinos' "liberation" from Church leadership. This is reminiscent of how Rizal revolted against the Spanish Church she tells me, and that these recent incidents indicate a "continuation of that legacy". Much of what Lisa disclosed to us on that day felt impactful, as the unease that emerged out of these aforementioned incidents seemed to resonate heavily on the pious communities and their struggle against the RH Law's passing. After Lisa has finished speaking, Lucia and I thank her and make our way back to her office. As we approach the end of the bustling campus halls, I am still absorbing the moment and making sure that my notes are

detailed enough, specific enough. “You’re lucky”, Lucia says finally. “She never talks to anybody like that for that long.”²⁴

The events occurring overseas—those surrounding Pope Benedict XVI’s stepping down as the head of the Holy See—did not help in strengthening the foundation that the Church’s credibility and societal influence once stood firmly upon. Rather, they indicated that the ground beneath the religious institution was indeed unsteady. The passing of the RH Law was undeniably momentous, and again (in Lisa’s words), a sense of “liberation” was being felt by the thousands who had been waiting for this piece of legislation to be signed. They were becoming freer at last from the “hold” of the Catholic Church. At least, for now they were.

Case Study #1: Re-negotiating Faith – Contesting Binary Politics and Catholic Identity

The discursive environment surrounding reproductive health and rights was ostensibly polarising, especially while anxieties around a “culture of death” were fervent among religious communities and the faithful masses. After USAID announced that it would cut back on its donations for contraceptives in the Philippines in 2003, the issue of reproductive health and services re-emerged as a key concern in the country. At this time, the country was recovering from the residue left by Estrada’s corrupt administration and the exacerbated debt left for the Filipino people who were still suffering from decades of foreign debt and uneven development since the Marcos era. By 2008, the same year the Global Financial Crisis occurred, USAID’s international funding was drawing to a close, and the thousands of families and individuals

²⁴ Field notes (handwritten), 11 March 2013.

(especially the poor) who had relied on these donations were left with few options for their reproductive needs.

The RH Bill was thus introduced back into the political forum, which prompted fervent public debates between RH advocates and conservative Catholic opponents to be featured in Philippine news and media. It was since 2008, that the discussions and religio-political arguments against or in support of the RH Bill were presented to the public and in social media as a dichotomous and binary issue. Several news reports perceived and presented the issue as one that was (and still is in many ways), a divisive national concern that resulted in creating simplistic definitions of Catholics and categorising “pro” and “anti” RH groups into two opposing extremes. Hence, the rhetoric of the “culture of death” prevailed in this “either/or” discursive climate, as discussed in the preceding section.

These debates did not bypass academic or theological discussions in any way. In fact, the dialogues that were occurring in educational and research settings still made their way into the public forum, especially since some of these institutions were largely run and led by religious community leaders and scholars. Several faculty members at Ateneo de Manila University, run by Jesuit leaders, were particularly vocal in their support for the RH Bill during this time when public and government interest in the issue was renewed. What resulted was a statement on the coexistence of Catholicism and support for the RH Bill. Entitled, “Catholics can Support the RH Bill in Good Conscience” (2008), the position paper was drafted and signed by a collaboration of individual faculty members from the university and meticulously laid out thoughtful responses to the major arguments made by the conservative “pro life” communities who opposed the bill’s mandates.

The paper also presented data on the troubling realities concerning poor Filipino women who experience serious health difficulties from multiple complicated pregnancies or post-abortion complications. It conveyed the struggles of poor families who only experience worsening economic hardship when they bring in more children whom they are unable to support, simply because modern contraceptives and reproductive options are insufficient in their communities. The key message still, was that supporting the bill should not compromise an individual's Catholic faith or identity, especially since this position would essentially be in support of poor communities. The authors of the letter state: "We further believe that it is possible for Catholics like ourselves to support [the RH Bill] in good conscience, even as we recognize, with some anguish, that our view contradicts the position held by some of our fellow Catholics, including our bishops" (Ateneo de Manila University Faculty 2008, p. 12). Later in the paper, the authors call on to other Catholic Filipinos to join in their solidarity and to support the passing of the bill: "To our fellow Catholics who, in good conscience, have come to conclude, as we have, that we need a reproductive health law: we ask you to declare your support for [the RH Bill]" (Ateneo de Manila University Faculty 2008, p. 14).

A response to the paper was produced by an international and diverse group of 42 theologians and academics, which essentially made the statement that the Ateneo faculty members were erroneous in their positions about Catholicism. The basis of the response was heavily influenced by Pope Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae* (1968), which again expressed the Catholic Church's official and inflexible position on the sanctity of human life. Unrelentingly, the response also emphasised: "The Pro-RH faculty members [of Ateneo de Manila University] are gravely mistaken—no Catholic can in good conscience can support House Bill 5043" (*An*

international academic response to some Ateneo de Manila Professors' Statement on Reproductive Health 2008).

Gian, a young instructor at Ateneo's Theology department sides with this response, even though he still agrees that others can support the RH Bill—they just cannot do it concurrently with self-identifying as a Catholic. In one of the offices of the Theology department, Gian explains this position to me after he had agreed to be one of my research informants: “[The] problem is, most people tend to think that if their belief is against the Church, [then] the Church is in error. Hardly do [they] look at the other possibility which is, [that] they're the ones who are in error.” I ask him to clarify for me, whether he believes that being “pro RH” can somehow be harmonious with one's Catholic faith. He shakes his head at this, “In the Catholic teaching it is not compatible.”²⁵

Again, the international response to Ateneo's position paper in support of the RH Bill as well as Gian's personal views are not uncommon in debates about the legislation, especially in a context where Catholic leaders compel their followers to choose a political position that stands either for “life” or a culture of “death”. Gian himself sees the possibility of only two sides from a religious perspective, similar to how the faith itself is framed in the RH debate. But, while he approaches Catholicism from an “either/or” standpoint, denying the compatibility of being “pro RH” with being Catholic, Gian is still haunted by the reproductive dilemmas of others, sometimes also being unable to grasp the details of their predicaments or find logic in their decisions. He is visibly troubled when he shares his account of a young female student whom he was asked to counsel about her unwanted pregnancy. In the end, the student dismissed Gian's guidance after he attempted to persuade her to keep her unborn child:

²⁵ Interview (recorded), 1 April 2013.

GR: A friend of mine asked me one day to talk to this new graduate. This was a couple of years ago, and the objective was to talk to her because she was contemplating abortion. And, I was the last resort, who tried to save the kid, right? So I was mustering all that I could, you know? I really was trying. The girl cried after I made some connection with her and the embryo, the foetus inside her. And I thought you know, [that] I had a good shot. A couple of days later, I asked the friend, “how is the girl?” It turns out, that night after I talked to her, she took the [abortifacient] pill. It was already in her bag. It was already in her bag! She took the pill, flushed it out. The thing was, that girl was the only child of a wealthy couple, quite “above average” wealthy. And the boyfriend who impregnated her wanted the kid. He wasn't running away. He wanted the kid. She was the one who wanted to abort it. And her top reasons were, her career, and the fact that her father would get angry. And this is wild, because I can understand that if you are so destitute, you can't. But she is wealthy and an only child to her parents. She had all the wealth to herself, her parents have everything.²⁶

There is an ease and cleanliness of logic in Gian's understandings and perspective of Catholic teachings on reproduction and family planning. That is, according to him, if you are truly Catholic then you cannot also promote modern contraceptives. This is, after all, the point he is trying to emphasise during our interview at Ateneo when he discusses the theological position papers on Catholicism and the RH Bill. But he expresses his awareness here, of how faith is not always the motivating factor or the most imperative point of guidance in reproductive dilemmas. In his encounter with this student, Gian still hoped that by referring to Catholic teachings on the sacredness of life, that the unnamed student would be persuaded not to terminate her pregnancy. Certainly, faith was not a large factor the student's predicament, but

²⁶ Interview (recorded), 1 April 2013.

Gian nonetheless utilised it as an attempt to save the unborn child, to emphasise the “connection” between the student and her foetus with a reference to a higher, religious force.

Upon realising the outcome of the young woman’s pregnancy, and as a way to make sense of her decision, Gian then turns to her socio-economic position. This, he argues, should have persuaded her to keep the child. “She had all the wealth to herself”, I still remember him saying in a saddened tone. Nonetheless, the young woman made the resolve to proceed with taking an abortifacient pill, a decision that clearly still confounds and disappoints Gian. In his view, her final decision to terminate her pregnancy is inexplicable. But as I posit earlier in the first chapter in my own disclosure of my reproductive choices, such dilemmas are not always impacted by access and availability of family planning services or steered by economic privileges. Rather, they are oftentimes dictated by personal experience and desire, separate from the strictures of wealth or poverty. They can be inconsistent with how reproductive decisions are portrayed in public and religious discourse, and can even betray the logics of socio-economic status.

Surely, even for the many others similar to Gian and who agree with the “either/or” rationale of the RH debate, the different variables, circumstances, and factors that produce one’s reproductive dilemmas are what trouble them in their advocacies. Their experiences and confrontations with the reproductive accounts of others remind them that there are *additional* influences involved in these predicaments—other considerations that impact an individual’s choice about reproduction. Thus, for those who find clarity in the binary framing of the RH debate, there are still encounters with the complexities of reproductive dilemmas when they are offered a glimpse into the intimate lives of others.

However, despite the CBCP's rigid views on reproductive health, there is no doubt that amongst the self-identified Roman Catholic population in the Philippines, individual mediations and negotiations with Church teachings are prevalent. While Gian stays loyal to his stance on the incompatibility of Catholicism with support for the RH Law, others continue to locate this compatibility between the two, which involves a continuous *back and forth* between their personal understandings of their faith and with their advocacy for reproductive rights. At times, this can also mean finding a "middle ground", which is not always clearly defined in certain sectors, such as that of religious leadership. Even amongst some advocates for reproductive health access, this internal negotiation with personal faith is neither easy nor simplistic. Demeterio-Melgar reminds us in her essay, "Raising Sexuality as a Political Issue in the Catholic Philippines" (2005), that "Catholic conservatism is so ingrained in the Filipino psyche", and continues to explicate that "as activists like us battle with the church structure, we must also battle with a part of ourselves" (p.164).

In a context that seemingly does not allow for these internal battles to exist even within its own organised religious communities—at least in public forums concerning the issue of RH—there are religious leaders and members of the clergy who grapple with official Church teachings on family planning, reproduction, and on the sexual and private lives of individuals. I recall a conversation I had with Fr. John, who preaches at a nearby parish in the Teacher's Village neighbourhood, within close proximity to the University of the Philippines-Diliman campus. We were introduced by a mutual friend of ours, Patricia, who is a women's rights activist in Quezon City and works as a social worker in the same neighbourhood. I was invited by Fr. John to speak with him at his office, after Patricia informed him of my field research on

reproductive politics in Metro Manila, and that I was looking to speak about related topics, including faith and religion.

Fr. John's willingness to provide a recorded account of our conversation together put me at ease immediately, as he welcomed me into his office. He prompted his personal secretary to make me a cup of coffee, even though it was exceptionally warm on that calm afternoon. "I'm just trying to gather opinions and different perspectives and politics on the RH Law", I tell Fr. John, who responds with a smile, ready for the set of interview questions that I have prepared for our interview. Incorrectly, however, I was expecting a conservative and traditionalist opposition against the RH legislation as Patricia had misinformed me of his political stance. I was surprised to discover that Fr. John's personal views on reproduction and sexuality were more supportive of the RH Law, and could be deemed "progressive" from a political and theological stance. What struck me, however, was his unwavering religiosity and faith in God, even though he recognises that the Church's conservative teachings about contraception are not completely reaching the Filipino public. He must remain mindful, however, of publicly sharing his views because of his own leadership position within the laity. Below, he confesses the separation between his personal feelings towards the intimate lives of Filipinos, and the restrictions imposed on him by his position as a leader of his parish:

JB: It is not our right to tell you that God does not forgive. We have no right because the love of God is greater than our own narrow-mindedness. But people, they get tired. Every time they [make] this sin of contraception, they go to the priest and some priests will admonish and scold them. Some will be more lenient, some will be more pastoral. They get tired...I get tired. And I want to really help people to make genuine adult choices in their lives, but I [am] limited by our church's position. So I have these secret feelings, and of course I have to say the official stance of the church in my

homilies, I cannot say my personal feelings. I have to say the stance of the church. But these personal feelings, sometimes I tell people about what I feel [including] genuine friends, those who have the capacity to understand.

CC: Do you feel conflicted between your position with the church and your personal opinions or is it something that you feel you can negotiate without tension?

JB: I feel like I can negotiate without tension. There is an area where I have to decide for myself. For example, in my own personal space sometimes I will take a position that I will have to be responsible for. I will have to face the consequences of it, either with the church or with civil society. And I will. I will stand for it if I decide I have placed my confidence into that decision. Now, the conflict probably will only arise if I will be asked to articulate officially my position, and then the two sides will decide where I am right now. And I tend to believe that the two sides have taken both extreme positions. Now, in that scenario we can never have dialogue anymore. So I want to stay in the middle. They will say that that is an act of cowardice, but thanks be to God, it is the middle ground persons who are the ones who confuse the talk. The other two have already atrophied their positions. They will never budge. But the middle people are still trying to find a way to resolve the conflict. So if they will say that [those in] the middle ground are the cowards, then perhaps I am a coward.²⁷

Fr. John does not want to compromise his own position with his clergy by expressing certain views that contradict those of the Church or CBCP, but frames his position by referring to God as the ultimate authority over the “sins” of humanity—rather than the Catholic Church itself. Still, it is insufficient to conclude that Fr. John’s views on reproduction and sexuality sit firmly at the centre of a spectrum, politically and religiously, despite his own affirmation that he prefers to “stay in the middle” on an issue that according to so many, has been monopolised by

²⁷ Interview (recorded), 20 February 2013.

two extreme sides. During the rest of our conversation, Fr. John speaks passionately about God and his faith and is not reluctant to state that the “love of God” is greater than the authority of the Church itself, even in matters of sexuality and intimacy. He tells me that he does his best not to judge or dictate the personal lives of others—even some of his close friends who have come out to him as homosexual. His views have changed over time, as he learned more about the private lives of his close friends and loved ones. Thus, while others who represent the Church “will never budge” on their views about reproductive health, Fr. John’s views have changed through his relationships with others and through his knowledge of the complex realities of Filipinos. His experiences and personal politics on reproduction convey *changeability*—an unfixed position that has transitioned over time through dialogue with those close to him. This is a component of reproductive dilemmas that is rarely captured in binary debates, including its fluidity and non-static state.

Fr. John is not situated on either end of the extreme sides taken by those who identify as strictly “pro” or “anti” RH, but attempts to speak for both sides in a way to “resolve the conflict” and “confuse the talk”. Although he professes his commitment to his own faith and belief in God, Fr. John rejects the “either/or” stance taken by others such as Gian. And while I expected to speak with many in the Philippines about reproductive politics and the complications caused by religious belief and material realities, it became clear to me in my encounter with Fr. John that the contours of personal faith and reproductive dilemmas are difficult to define.

In the robust sector of non-governmental work and organising, there exist similar mediations, in which NGO activists feel the need to define their faith and find a cohesive connection between their religious identities and their political sentiments. This is especially true as they are exposed to people’s everyday realities in regards to reproductive planning and

the hardships of poverty. In the very early stages of my fieldwork in Quezon City, after I had already relocated from Cavite, I was introduced to Bea, who works in the Philippine chapter of Catholics For RH, an organisation that aims to “bring Catholics into full harmony with their faith and realize that there is no dissonance with their being Catholic and simultaneously believing in the advocacy and goals of reproductive health and rights.”²⁸ Bea and I met a few days before our recorded interview together at the University of the Philippines-Diliman campus, when two of our mutual friends brought me along to meet her for a quiet and informal lunch. Later in the week, during our conversation together one afternoon at the same restaurant where we were initially introduced, I learn about Bea’s past as a youth organiser and about her earlier days as a student activist on campus. This is unsurprising for me, as her demeanor is pleasant, assertive, and charismatic—it is easy for me to envision her in an activist role as she is so equipped with fervor and expertise. When I specifically inquire about the role of faith in her professional work with Catholics For RH, Bea does not hesitate to speak about its importance in her personal and professional life:

CC: Do you feel that faith is very much a part of your advocacy...from a personal point of view?

BC: Exactly, you know...I never really realised it until I joined a faith-based organisation. I learned that...actually what we're doing is a reflection of our grace from God. And so I actually believe that my work is actually my prayer. What I do [for] myself, how I relate to the other human beings, how I relate with my environment, is

²⁸ This mandate is written on the organisation’s official page on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Catholics4RH/info>

exactly how I would like to relate with my God. So others might find it cliché but it's really true, my work is my prayer.²⁹

She delves further into some of the more negative experiences that she has to confront as someone who works in the faith-based activist community. Indeed, while she feels that the work she does as an advocate for reproductive rights is her own form of “prayer”, she also has to encounter hostility from others who reject her position on Catholicism and reproductive politics. Similar to the views of the theologians who responded to the “pro RH” faculty at Ateneo, Bea's opponents challenge the consistency and authenticity of her Catholic faith. She continues to delineate below:

BC: It really hurts when people say that we're “fake Catholics”, that we do not know what we're doing, and if we do not follow the lines we might as well leave the Church. It's like, “Hey, you do not own the Church. The people make up the Church, and we will sustain it! Without the people it is a structure, it is a building. So do not judge us!” It's difficult. They judge you just because your advocacy does not conform with what they believe in. It's hard because a lot of the community women we work with would cry and some have altogether stopped going to mass, or would go to another parish just to hear the mass. So they change churches instead. And in fact, a lot have already done so.³⁰

Bea is clearly committed to her own faith, but also expresses hardship and frustration at some of the strict preaching that she and other community women have encountered from religious leaders who oppose reproductive rights. She takes pride in her professional life, in which she is able to work with other religious communities or parish members and advocate for

²⁹ Interview (recorded), 8 February 2013.

³⁰ Interview (recorded), 8 February 2013.

reproductive health access. The binary and polemic discourses that have shaped the RH Law debates only affect her and other Filipinos negatively. The rhetoric that has been shaped by the CBCP and the concept of the “culture of death” have only caused Catholics who support the RH Law to feel guilt, shame, and a sense of misconduct.

The variations in the views of the narrators who spoke with me—the constant rethinking, repositioning, struggling, and hurt that is experienced in an environment where binary discourses govern how individuals choose to conduct their personal politics, faith, and intimate lives—is not the only reality that is being masked by this same public rhetoric. The “culture of death”, a concept that been effectively utilised to obstruct the passing of the RH Law over the last decade, also foregrounds the assumption that Filipinos are only identifiable by their religious affiliations. In actuality, Filipinos are diverse in sexual orientation, in how they operate within systems of gender, and in social structures of class and wealth. But, Fr. John and Bea are representative of some of the individuals who work on the meso levels of Philippine society—they represent community organisations and institutions that work closely with different social factions. And while their experiences provide more insight into the internal lives of those who lead and represent active community organisations, their socio-economic statuses differ from those who live in the margins of Metro Manila and the suburbs. What, for instance, are the complexities that exist in the reproductive dilemmas of those who do not have the same employment opportunities, societal positions, and professional networks? How does the dimension of the Philippines’ rapidly growing economy complicate the decision making of individuals who also turn to (or away) from their Catholic faiths in their reproductive strategies? The added dimension of the *global* and how it is enmeshed with reproductive dilemmas are explored later in this chapter.

For this larger project, the purpose of exploring reproductive *dilemmas* and using the analytical tool of “intimate economies” is to locate the tensions, frictions, and discontinuities that transcend binary ways of thinking about personal experiences in Metro Manila and Cavite. Dilemmas reject the idea that *choices* and politics about reproduction are static or even cohesive. The concept of “intimate economies”, on the other hand, discards the notion that markets and intimate life are separate from one another (Wilson 2004). The complexities of experiences related to reproduction are only obscured when they are framed or understood by dichotomous logic.

We have seen that binaries are utilised in public discourse on the RH Law and similarly to how conservative groups define Catholic identity. But, as evidenced in the narratives of both Fr. John and Bea, there are affectations and negotiations that exist between the two “sides” of the RH Law debate and with Catholic faith. Furthermore, there are changed opinions and transitions in political views. The intention here is not only to explore *dilemmas* to simply conclude that they are ambiguous, but it is to disrupt binary discourses about reproduction in the Philippine context because of how they fortify power structures related to the RH Law debate. As conservative groups and the religious hierarchy of the CBCP rely on a “unified” position against the RH Law, for instance, they do so with the motive of grasping onto their relevance—a political status that Lisa (from Miriam College) herself said is weakening in light of the RH Law’s passing. Binary ways of thinking about reproductive politics also undermine the individuals who refuse to choose sides or identify with one cohesive sentiment. In the case of Bea, her pious opponents seek to delegitimise her activist work by marking her as an inauthentic Catholic—they attempt to render her powerless in the NGO community by discrediting her faith as being “fake”.

It has been a tradition for feminist and queer scholars to also dismantle binary ways of looking at categories of gender and sexuality, in order to “recognize the fluidity, instability and fragmentation of identities and a plurality of gendered subject positions” (Richardson 2006, p. 22). In doing so, patriarchal and heteronormative ways of defining gender and sexuality are destabilised in the process. Moreover, in deconstructionist streams of feminist scholarship, the project is “not to reverse binary oppositions but to problematize the very idea of opposition and the notion of identity upon which it depends” (Poovey 1988, p. 52). Thus, in similar fashion, by foregrounding the “plurality” of faith embedded in reproductive dilemmas—specifically, the plurality in political and religious sentiments—I highlight how binary discourses operate in tandem with larger institutional forces that intend to maintain their power through dichotomous rhetoric. An acknowledgement of the “middle” ground that Fr. John attempts to trace along the spectrum of the RH debate, and of the compatibility between Catholicism and support for the RH Law as expressed by Bea and the faculty at Ateneo de Manila University, would only destabilise the already shaky status of the Philippine Catholic Church. As well, these nuanced positions would—in the words of Fr. John—“confuse the talk”.

Returning again to my conversation with Fr. John, I reflect back on his willingness to be open-minded towards the people in his life, and how these connections also affected his own relationship with Church ideology and his work as a religious leader. Despite the revelations he has had about others and about his own journey with his faith, he does not deny the influence and resilience of the Catholic Church, especially in times of societal transition or change. When I ask him if he foresees any challenges to implementing the RH Law (this again, was after the bill had just been signed into law but still preceded the Supreme Court’s SQAQO), Fr. John remains confident in the endurance of the religious institution. He anticipates that the Church will

continue to rally against the law's implementation with force and conviction, and will maintain social and political influence in the country. He elaborates to me further:

JB: ...here in the Philippines, our civil government [is] one hundred plus years old. The church? Four hundred plus years old. In the whole world, the only institution that is continuously alive and still kicking and dynamic is the Church. It has been for two thousand plus years. No other institution is at that venerable age. And in those two thousand plus years we have encountered a lot of problems—persecutions here and there—yet we survive. We have the skills to navigate complex political situations. So the government probably wins the short war with the RH Bill. But, I am more than positive that the Church will win the long war.³¹

He is correct in stating that the Church—in other regional contexts and the Vatican itself—has withstood countless societal “crises” for centuries. Even for myself, it is hard to imagine the Philippines without a strong Catholic Church to continue guiding the political directions of the state or taking the lead in social and moral teachings. It is difficult envisioning the country without the mentorship and patronage of such a crucial religious entity that has existed in Filipino society for more than a few centuries.

But the very inflexibility of the Church's stance against the RH Law and the use of polarising political rhetoric do convey that the institution has been displaying a sense of “panic” and trepidation, as if it senses that it is losing its grip over political and social matters. In the case of the RH Law debate, Raffin and Cornelio (2009) argue that the reason the legislation itself evokes so much anxiety amongst the Church (and amongst “pro life” groups) is not merely because it clashes with Catholic doctrine, but because its mandates address the somewhat unreachable, private lives of individuals. They state: “What could be more worrisome for the

³¹ Interview (recorded), 20 February 2013.

Catholic Church as an institution is the fact that the Bill touches on private moral matters (such as the individual's decision to engage in sexual acts and whether or not to procreate)...the Bill becomes a more imminent threat to the institutional position of the Church over the individual" (Raffin and Cornelio 2009, p. 789).

The RH Law then, is "ultimately a challenge to the institutional and ideological position of the Catholic Church over the state and society" (Raffin and Cornelio, 2009, p. 789). The Church has been successful in helping to liberate the Filipino masses from state dictatorship and corrupt leadership on a societal level, yet fully governing the reproductive and sexual decisions of the Filipino people is challenging and nearly unattainable. This is the reason that an RH legislation is capable of undermining the Church's authority on Philippine society in such an apparent manner. It is also the reason why Raffin and Cornelio (2009) argue that the Church has displayed behaviour typical to "institutional panic". Using Alan Blum's (1996) discussion of "institutional panic", the authors locate the similarities between Blum's explications of the term to how the Church and the CBCP have reacted in debates regarding reproduction. Raffin and Cornelio assert that this type of "panic" exhibits a "sense of desperation that arises when people feel unable to resolve a social problem. Such an orientation leads people to give up hope of changing the situation for the better. Instead, human beings opt for ad hoc, reactive and impulsive responses..." (2009, p. 787). The CBCP's usage of the "culture of death" in its "anti RH" campaigns and the decisions of bishops to "walk out" of Senate discussions on the bill indeed indicate traces of "institutional panic", which again is a similar analysis to the observation that Lisa made to me during our conversation at Miriam College (Raffin and Cornelio 2009, p. 791).

However, while the Church's societal and political authority is perceived to be waning in certain ways, the narratives of my informants in this chapter (and in the following chapters) signify that Catholic faith and values are still influential at the meso and micro levels of society, even if they are not always consistent with Church views or ideology. The culture of Catholicism is, in many ways, still prevalent in Metro Manila and in Cavite despite ideologies regarding reproductive rights, population management, or other such issues that may present threats of a more secularised state. In actuality, secularisation theory—which assumes that the public influence of religious institutions will dissipate as states continue to transition towards modernisation—also cannot be applied to the Philippine context. The Church has certainly been reactionary against the “pro RH” campaigns, but it still maintains a firm grip among the pious communities and “anti RH” groups. Religion clearly still plays an important part in Filipino life, even if at the institutional level, its power is inconsistent or unstable. Following Niamh Reilly's discussion in “Rethinking the Interplay of Feminism and Secularism in a Neo-Secular Age” (2011), the political and social authority of the Catholic Church in the Philippines changes and adapts, but also impacts social and religious life in various levels and spheres: “...it is now generally accepted that the presumption of secularization as an inevitable and singular process of modernization is no longer tenable. Empirical evidence shows much variation in how religion manifests across and within societies at micro, meso and macro levels, and how its influence changes with other societal changes, waxing or waning in different times, under different conditions” (p. 97).

Although the influence of the Philippine Catholic Church seems to “wax and wane” in different temporal periods, we cannot understand reproductive decisions by only looking at narratives about faith and at the political responses (or moments of “panic”) of the CBCP. The

country is certainly responding to the change being brought about by a newly passed reproductive health law. But, change has also been brought upon by the waxing and waning of the global economy. And in direct (and indirect ways), the products and processes of these economic dynamics have affected the opinions, views, and decision-making of Filipinos in regards to reproductive planning, intimacy, and how they want to build their families.

Case Study #2: “Machismo”, Transnational Families, and the *Imagined* Filipino Family

As discussed in the introductory chapter, the traditional Filipino family is written into the constitution as being foundational to the Philippine nation and state. Several of my research participants, however, cite its instability as a social institution of the state, especially in relation to reproductive health politics. Considering its patriarchal blueprint, some see that the idealisation of the Filipino family is nevertheless tenuous because of prevalent infidelity amongst Filipino husbands. The Family Code of the Philippines even allows for such deviances in its acceptance of “half-blood” siblings within a traditional family unit (Executive Order No. 209, Section 150). One theology instructor, Charles, has lived in the Philippines for nearly a decade, and expresses his deep concerns about the need for comprehensible reproductive health legislation. Having lived in different parts of the United States and worked in developing regions as a missionary, Charles finally decided to settle in the Philippines to be close to his wife and her relatives. Most of his own advocacy and religious work has taken him to several poor communities in Metro Manila, where he has spent a considerable amount of time speaking with locals living in poverty, including female sex workers. Due to his experiences working in these

poor communities and his own familiarity with the hardships of Filipino women in sex work, Charles fully supports the RH Law.

One afternoon in early April, many of the “pro RH” advocates are still absorbing the frustration and shock from the Supreme Court’s SQAQ, which again halted the RH Law’s implementation for 180 days. When Charles and I converse in his office, I bring up the fact that other individuals whom I have spoken to are adamant in their opposition towards the law in defense of “family values”, and their belief that alternative methods of family planning would only weaken the institution of the Filipino family. Charles is dismayed at this opinion, and describes to me his own observations about the *imagined* stability of marriage and family in the Philippines. Below is an excerpt from our exchange concerning this issue:

CL: I ride my bike home at night and I go around and I see women sitting outside of bars all over the place. And I don't see any foreigners there. I mean, the places that I go to are not foreigner driven. These are not foreigners that are frequenting [the bars], it's Filipinos, and I think that we need to acknowledge that. Can we be honest about what's happening? Could we be honest about how patriarchy and machismo still defines so much of our male culture and can we confront that? Can we confront the fact that too many women accept the fact that their husbands cheat on them and they're okay with it as long as they're not in love with the woman?

CC: So you noticed that too?

CL: Oh yeah. I mean, it's ridiculous. I've talked to my friends and they say their biggest struggle in marriage counseling is [that] 90% of men cheat on their wives.³²

³² Interview (recorded) 20 March 2013.

While expressed from a subjective standpoint, Charles' observations are not without validity and are reflective of a larger cultural problem of male infidelity in the Philippines. Other scholars of both the Philippines and elsewhere have explored the gendered dynamics of "machismo". Ingoldsby (1991) investigates how "machismo" is prevalent in Latin American families, which is unsurprising as the Philippines and other Latin American nations share colonial histories due to having both been under the powers of Spain in the distant past. Apart from "aggressiveness" being a characteristic of "machismo", Ingoldsby also asserts that male "hypersexuality" is part of the same cultural system (1991, p. 58). He writes that for the male to take sexual advantage of young women is "cause for pride and prestige, not blame. In fact, some men will commit adultery just to prove to themselves that they can do it" (1991, p. 58).)

In her study of the sexual division of labour in the country, Eviota (1992) mentions the trend of male infidelity and "machismo", as Charles also does during our conversation together. Eviota explains the sexual and gender dynamics related to "machismo" below:

The male sexual urge became an expression of male privilege and rounded out the Filipino "machismo" complex of expectations: extensive pre-marital and extra-marital sexual involvement, demonstrations of male fertility through the early and rapid production of children, negative attitudes towards male contraceptives, a dominant manner toward women, disdain and disregard for domestic responsibilities, disapproval of their wives engaging in paid work outside the home, and emphasis on physical strength (and often, violence) as a means of settling disagreements.

(Eviota 1992, p. 24)

Charles even refers back to his bewilderment at how several media outlets portrayed Senator Ramon Revilla Sr.—who is rumoured to have fathered more than 70 children with different women—and how these outlets *revered* Revilla Sr.'s legacy and depicted his extraordinarily

large family as a patriarchal achievement. Our conversation, in fact, is called to a pause when Charles insists on showing me the media coverage of Senator Revilla Sr.'s remarkably large family.³³ After we view different news coverage on Senator Revilla Sr.'s extensive family size, Charles continues to reprimand "machismo" culture, and how it worsens existing patriarchal values that undermine and undervalue Filipino women:

CL: This is a "normal" thing. And it's "okay", you know?...You know, we're just supposed to accept the fact that our men will have several sex partners but the women must be pure?...Why is it okay for men to sleep around but not women? And, is that for the women's sake? Are we protecting our women or is it because men want to make sure they get to have sex with virgins? You know what I mean? Like, to me that just seems to be a rationalisation of patriarchy. And then we say patriarchy doesn't exist because, you know, our women work as much as men and our women are more successful, right? But at the same time we need to have an honest look at what's going on with male culture in the Philippines, at what's going on with men.³⁴

Without generalising about the male population in the Philippines, it is still justifiable to make a claim that "machismo" and male infidelity are a prevalent, gendered, societal concern. Yet, it is also somehow overlooked or ignored in the communities, especially by wives who choose to stand by their husbands for the sake of keeping their families as a harmonious unit. "Machismo" behaviour sometimes goes un-addressed in marital partnerships because the rewards of having a large family with numerous children offset the domestic dissonance caused by male infidelity. Ingoldsby recognises this same response to "machismo" by women in Latin American families, and traces it to the gendered culture of "marianismo" which accompanies

³³ During our conversation, Charles showed me an article on his computer, which featured Ramon Revilla Sr.'s large family: Dumaul, Mario and Ryan Chua. "Ramon Revilla Sr. has 72 kids, says spokesperson". ABS-CBN News. 2 November 2011. [Online] Available at: <http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/nation/11/02/11/ramon-revilla-sr-has-72-kids-says-spokesperson>

³⁴ Interview (recorded), 20 March 2013.

male infidelity and “hypersexuality”: “Male dominance is...a myth, in part perpetuated by the women themselves because it preserves their way of life, which has certain advantages to them” (1991, p. 60).

If “machismo” and extra-marital affairs among Filipino males undercut traditional family structures (even in a state that does not legally recognise divorce), the effects of labour migration further subvert the foundation of the idealised family unit. This can be seen in the common and widespread trend of transnational families in the Philippines—families that again, are separated when parents or adult kin, spouses, or other relatives leave the Philippines to find employment as OFWs. As parents, kin, and spouses physically separate due to overseas work opportunities, the remainders of these families are left behind—in several cases, for years at a time.

The phenomenon of transnational families has compelled feminist anthropologists and sociologists to explore how familial relationships are ruptured and maintained, and how intimacies are practiced across geographic space. Emotional and psychological distress, for instance, are explored in “left behind” children, whose parents (either one or both) have departed for long and even undetermined durations to the *elsewheres* dictated by global labour markets (Battistella and Conaco 1998; Asis 2006; Baldassar 2007). Transnational practices of mothering and fathering have also become a topic of scholarly interest, including studies on the use of communication technology to narrow the gaps between OFW parents and their kin (Parreñas 2001a; Uy-Tioco 2007, Madianou and Miller 2011, Galam 2012). Scholars also continue to explore the extensive networks of care that are utilised when parents are separated from their children due to labour migration, and the sophisticated ways in which extended families and close friends collaborate together to form systems of care (Hochschild 2000; Yeates 2004; Baldassar and Merla 2013). Parreñas (2005) further elaborates on the distance and separation

between parents and their “left behind” children caused by the dispersals of labour migration, and how familial life has changed radically in the Philippines:

Migration engenders changes in a family. This is particularly so in the Philippines where a great number of mothers and fathers emigrate to sustain their families economically. There are no reliable government statistics on the number of mothers and fathers leaving their children behind in the Philippines, but non-governmental organizations estimate there are approximately nine million of these children growing up physically apart from a migrant father, migrant mother or both migrant parents (Kakammpi 2004). This figure represents approximately 27 percent of the overall youth population. The formation of transnational households poses challenges to the achievement of intimate familial relations between migrant parents and the children they leave behind in the Philippines.

(p. 317)

The trends of OFWs and transnational families signal the complicated relationship that pertains between the Filipino family and global economic development policies. They also exhibit how “intimate economies” are manifested and operate in the Philippine context, since economic sustenance is largely dependent upon the separation of parents and children and between spouses or intimate partners. There are processes of gendering at work here as well. Although OFWs include both male and female labourers of various class backgrounds and with different motives to go abroad, scholars (such as Yeates 2004; Tadiar 2004; Parreñas; Asis 2006) have criticised the *feminised* labour migration of Filipino women, as discussed in the previous chapter. Configurations of families, and dynamics of gender and how they are performed overseas and in the Philippines are interwoven with the dynamics of the global economy. As a result, the

“intimate economies” of transnational families and labour migration also complicate certain political views and experiences with reproduction.

Thus, the processes of the global and the prevalence of “machismo” as pointed out by Charles, demonstrate the *imagined* traditional Filipino family. Both “machismo”—in the form of widespread male infidelity and “hypersexuality”—and the physical absences caused by transnational distances between OFWs and their “left behind” families, bring attention to the instabilities of “anti RH” rationale and to the idea of the Filipino family itself. As Bea and Fr. John’s narratives highlight the gradients of reproductive dilemmas and politics in regards to faith, Charles’ observations directly refer to gender norms to destabilise the idea of the Filipino family and the “pro life” views that attempt to uphold this social unit. The Filipino family and how it is rendered in the RH debate is *imagined* because of existing gender contradictions and because it has been reconfigured by the globalising effects of labour migration.

But political sentiments and views on reproduction are not only made convoluted by the *imagined* Filipino family. Conservative views on reproduction are, at times, laden with the same neoliberal values that have re-shaped the Philippine economy since the 1960s and 1970s. In global market ideology, markets are “often associated with individual freedom and choice” (Wilson 2004, p. 192). In my conversations with individuals in the field, this same neoliberal rationale that privileges the importance of individual choice (through *self-discipline* and *responsibility*) is also applied to the sexual conduct and reproductive practices of Filipinos. Hence, according to the “pro life” individuals whom I met in the region, reproduction and intimacy should be practiced in the same ways that global economic prosperity ought to be attained.

My discussion of these individuals is not meant to criticise or negatively represent their opinions—in actuality, these individuals were generous in offering to share their views on such a controversial and oftentimes intimate topic. Their political and religious “pro life” aims are also not without their own value or weight. However, exploring their narratives helps us to further examine some of the contradictions of “pro life” discourses, which are situated in a context that continues its economic development at the expense of the very social institutions that its narrators aspire to protect. It helps us to discern how even neoliberal ideology is present in the RH Law debates and in the personal expressions of those who disagree with its objectives and mandates.

Case Study #3: Moral and Economic Crisis – “Anti RH” Sentiments and Neoliberal Ideology

Evidently, labour migration and uneven economic development are not unique to the Philippines, nor are neoliberal integration and market participation. It is remarkable nonetheless, how social life in the Philippines has transformed in ways that make personal matters inextricably connected to economic markets, and how even everyday language, mundane practices, and individual opinions have global market repercussions. The phenomenon of OFWs, the remittances they send back as the fruits of their labour, and the transnational families that result from their leaving, are interrelated after-effects of the Philippines’ globalised economy that mark such social change.

But these particular after-effects also draw out certain contradictions in “anti RH” or “pro life” discourses. This is primarily because conservative, religious, and “pro life” individuals

advocate for the protection of traditional family structures and the strength of married couples while often also referring to neoliberal concepts (such as *self-discipline* and *responsibility*) to argue against reproductive health legislation. Some respondents even encourage labour migration and remark on the benefits of remittances, even if intimate partners and extended families experience physical absences and long-term separation as a result.

Thus, while in the field, I noticed that the rationale of globalised markets has percolated down to ideas of how intimacy should be conducted. The logic of neoliberalism as it is applied in the material world, prioritises the “rolling back” of the state and the “transfer of ‘public’ services and functions to private (for profit) interests” (Richardson, 2005, p. 516). We see, for example, how the Philippine economy adapted neoliberal policies in the ways in which public services (including the health sector) began to deregulate and become privatised and decentralised, which Lindio-McGovern (2007) also explicates in the previous chapter. These processes of “rolling back” intended to decrease accountability of the state and pass it down to individual citizens and other players in the global markets. Self-governing and performing both *self-discipline* and *responsibility* therefore became critical practices within the neoliberal state. As Richardson (2005) describes briefly, the neoliberal state thrives on the “individual[’s] freedom and rights against the excessive intervention of the state” (p. 516)

The notion that *self-discipline* and *responsibility* must be applied to reproduction and sexual conduct is evidently shared amongst “pro life” individuals in Metro Manila. Near the very end of my stay in the Philippines, in May of 2013, one of my informant’s good friends, Charlene, contacted me after she had heard about my research on the RH Law. She invited me to attend a public seminar being held and organised by Pro-Life Philippines, a Catholic organisation whose members adamantly advocate for “pro life” values all over the country, and who were

active in campaigns that opposed the RH legislation. It was an overwhelming time for me as I was in the midst of preparing to return home to Canada—I was swamped by my “To Do” list of tasks that needed to be completed, including sorting out details of my leased apartment and making time to bid farewell to my relatives who were scattered all over Metro Manila. Nonetheless, while Charlene’s invitation to attend the Pro-Life Philippines’ seminar came as a surprise, it was an invitation to expand my data collection (and my own personal understanding) of “anti RH” voices, which continue to be substantial in the ongoing debate surrounding reproductive health.

Upon meeting Charlene for the first time at the intersection of Legarda and Bustillos in the bustling district of Sampaloc, I noted her to be petite and welcoming, much older than I had anticipated her to be and also so soft-spoken. She led me through the lively streets, past the street vendors, the homeless seeking refuge from the intense heat, and the busy produce market customers, to a church tucked away in a calmer, quieter corner of the area. She was grateful that I was able to meet her and that I was accompanying her to the seminar, confessing that she wanted me to know more about their “cause”. With this request, I kept an open mind (as all researchers should), and was greeted by Pro-Life Philippines’ staff at the entrance to the conference room.

We had arrived twenty minutes too early, so Charlene took it upon herself to get to know me while we walked in the courtyard of the modest church. In contrast to the happenings and movements near Legarda and Bustillos, the courtyard was near silent despite our footwork in and out of the shade, and sanctuary from the hard-hitting sunlight was provided to us by the church’s old tower. I gave Charlene a brief breakdown of my research goals, but she was more interested in where I came from, and how long I have been away from home. After some minutes, I

revealed to her that my father grew up here, on España nearby the University of Santo Tomas. “That’s where he met my mother”, I said to Charlene, to which she reacted with a smile. I could sense that she began to feel more comfortable with me after discovering that my parents had attended the university in her own hometown, the place where we had just met and the area where most of her faith-based advocacy had been taking place for so many years.

It was nearer to the commencement of the seminar. Charlene noticed a few of her fellow “pro life” advocates near the entrance of the seminar room, and rushed me over to introduce me to them. I met two middle-aged women who cordially welcomed me to the seminar. They were sitting together across from where I was standing, but in-between us was a long plastic table adorned with posters, books, T-shirts, and miscellaneous stickers with “pro life” logos. “NO TO THE RH BILL”, one sticker read. The women attempted to sell me educational CDs created by the seminar’s speaker, which contained different speeches and lectures promoting “pro life” values. I politely declined to purchase any of the items, but began to touch and handle them out of my own curiosity. I picked up and examined small plastic key-chains for instance, shaped and molded to the likening of unborn fetuses. My interactions with these trinkets and with the women were cut short when Charlene finally pulled me over with her kind arms towards the seminar room. More people from outside the church, also relieved to finally be indoors, were moving into the spacious room where we all began to disperse to find our seating.

The two-hour seminar had been designed for counselors, parents, and educators, and was focused on strategies on teaching youth and students about “pro life” values in the aftermath of the RH Law having been recently passed. It was part of a two-day long conference that centred on the issue of the RH Law, and was open to religious leaders, health practitioners, and members of the public who shared the same political and religious views. Upon entering the conference

room where the seminar was being held, I took my place at the far end of the room with Charlene, where I would be able to observe the seminar and its audience from a convenient vantage point. The individual who was leading the seminar was a charismatic speaker who often works with other faith-based organisations—he appeared comfortable in front of the attentive crowd, and with the assistance of his microphone. The audience members had each been given copies of the Power Point presentation, which offered suggestions on how to oppose and contradict the arguments of the supporters of the RH Law and included catchphrases (e.g. “Love the Sinner, Hate the Sin”) to use in their work with youth.³⁵

The speaker framed his presentation under the idea that the Philippines—along with the rest of the world—is undergoing a “crisis of morality”. The events and debates surrounding the RH Law, he elaborated, is reflective of the imminent moral decline of Filipino society caused by a “contraceptive mentality” that undermines the institution of marriage, the Filipino family, and the moral values of the country. In providing statistics that indicate moral decline in the United States, he cited secondary research in the presentation that stated that approximately “90% of people” who have committed crimes in the U.S. come from “broken families”.³⁶ Another Power Point slide depicted visuals of a pyramid structure to illustrate the “slippery slope”, or downward trajectory of society’s moral values.³⁷

But the relationship between moral decline and reproductive health access was not the only connection made in the seminar. The speaker also employed the idea of “wealth” in one of

³⁵ Field notes (handwritten), 24 May 2013.

³⁶ This argument and the research that supports it are influenced by Charles Murray’s writings on the British underclasses in the 1980s. In his essay, “The Emerging British Underclass” (1990), Murray linked crime and unemployment to the growing trend of “illegitimate” children from single-parent households (where in most cases, the fathers were not present).

³⁷ Both the “contraceptive mentality” and “slippery slope” concepts assume that societal standards of morality will decrease more and more over time, as more “threats” to the institutions of marriage and the family become legalised consecutively. Examples of this include the legalisation of same-sex marriage, abortion, and divorce in other regional contexts (Hundley 2013).

the catchphrases in the Power Point presentation, as a way of demonstrating to the audience that rejecting the implementation of the RH Law could bring about economic and spiritual prosperity. As he discussed this, I noticed yet again, another slogan that pronounced this message in a short and memorable statement: “No to Reproductive Health. Yes to Reproductive Wealth!” As we were hidden away from the crowdedness of Samaploc, so near the impoverished side streets of Legarda Station’s chaotic intersection, the idea of “wealth” was preached and celebrated in the seminar room because of what it promised to Manila’s poor. It promised economic possibilities and moral restoration, if only we could continue rejecting the RH Law and re-strengthen the Filipino family unit.³⁸

In the case of the Philippines, it is not just the “traditional” (yet *imagined*) family structure that is crucial to the economic well being of the state, but also the size of Filipino families. On a separate occasion, for instance, during a conversation with a Filipino economist, I was told that “large families” are a “Filipino cultural value”, and that families with several children are advantageous to the economy. The economist, whose name is Roberto, explained that a growing and large Filipino population would be able to take on in-demand labour roles—as either migrant workers or casual employees—and are therefore pivotal to the Philippines’ economic growth. This is yet another example that shows how “pro life” sentiments refer to the demands of globalised markets, and to how reproduction and the intimate lives of families are tied to economic prosperity and aspiration.

But his argument of course, is not without its own set of dilemmas or ambiguous affectations towards this preferred strategy for prosperity and economic development. Roberto, who considers himself religiously conservative, is aware of the emotional and psychological

³⁸ Field notes (handwritten), 24 May 2013.

sacrifices that are made by the OFWs who leave their families, and who embody and perform the discontinuities of labour migration. He is unyielding in his belief that large Filipino families will continue the trend of growth in the Philippines' GDP, which he values to be an important indicator of the country's increasing economic success. But Roberto is also troubled by the "social costs", the short-term detriments of the labour market economy that affect these same families. "It is undesirable, that's one thing that we have to stop, the social costs," Roberto says to me in his office, located in the commercial area of Pasig. He is much older than I, an internationally trained scholar who disagrees strongly with reproductive health and rights. "For example, separation because the wife looks for another husband [if her husband is away too long as an OFW]...those are the things we have to address. And sometimes children feel abandoned. They have all the money in the world but they don't have their parents taking care of them so they go through psychological difficulties." He does not linger on these "social costs" though, on how the economic strengths of labour migration are also the causes of the country's current social weaknesses. So he quickly reminds me that there exist OFWs who leave for other personal reasons, who "go abroad by choice", without the constraints of financial necessity. I do not argue with him on this point, but I know that his views on reproduction and the economic future of the Philippines were not formulated without thinking about the dispersal and emotional ruptures experienced by Filipino families and intimate partners.

Returning back to the Pro-Life Philippines seminar, I noticed a theme that was present in many "pro life" views about family planning and reproduction. It was the argument that *responsibility* and *self-discipline* should guide family planning practices, rather than reliance on modern forms of contraceptives. Thus, as the speaker called out intently for the audience members to assist the "pro life" movement by appealing against the RH Law, he simultaneously

promoted the notion of *masipag* or *self-discipline* as the solution to natural family planning, accompanied with Power Point slides conveying other catchy and attractive phrases. The slogan “No to Birth Control! Yes to Self-Control!”, for instance, asserted the need for individual *responsibility* in sexual relations. The contradiction here of course, was that “pro life” groups were also calling for urgent state restrictions on the private and intimate lives of Filipinos.³⁹

The notion of *responsibility* is mentioned more than once in my conversations with individuals who oppose the RH legislation. Under a neoliberal framework, the term *responsibility* is an extension of individual choice, and again emphasises the accountability of the individual in creating his or her own success within the free market’s principles of competition. It is the reason neoliberal ideology has effectively undermined the principles of the welfare state and government support of social services in developed states including the U.S. and the United Kingdom. Its rationale supports the view that citizens who are not financially successful and who require welfare benefits are actually “lazy”, and therefore lacking such *responsibility*.

Martin is a health practitioner and academic, and agreed to speak to me about his opinions on the RH Law after one of our mutual friends, a “pro life” nurse, introduced us. While he is not completely against the RH Law’s mandates to provide public health access to maternal care and family planning counseling for couples, he opposes the idea that federal funding should be used for artificial contraceptives. He argues instead, that these budgets can be allocated to other resources such as education and job training. Sex, Martin explains, should be done *responsibly* and without the assistance of modern birth control. If sex and intimacy could be practiced both responsibly and with self-control, funding for the RH Law’s implementations would be completely unnecessary:

³⁹ Field notes (handwritten), 24 May 2013.

MD: I think what the trouble with the RH legislation is, is it gives you a glimpse of a lopsided, one-track focus on family planning. Do you really expect government....with all the other requirements of other development programmes to be funded, [to fund] artificial facilities? It does not sink well. If I were a Christian and a firm believer of the sanctity of life, why should I entertain birth control? It is my responsibility as a parent, as husband, or even a couple, to undertake that part... our mutual part of the relationship to be responsible in doing [things] like, having sex. You don't have sex in one corner, and do it just because you want to do it. You do it with all respect. And it is not possible for anybody [who is] engaged in sex without having to entertain the output expected of having sex. So, why should government spend for artificial facilities [or] for family planning? You don't have classrooms, you don't have books for children, families do not have three square meals a day, and here you are...supporting condoms and all those contraceptives.⁴⁰

For another one of my research participants named Lydia, the idea that laziness is the inherent cause of poverty (rather than a lack of reproductive health services or rights) is even related to religion, and the “will of God”. She is a university administrator and a member of the laity, but also reveals to me that she was previously active in the feminist organisations that are affiliated with her university. I am intrigued at her past as a feminist advocate, and at her present situation as a member of her religious community who is so adamantly against the RH Law. This is yet another example of the inconsistencies of reproductive dilemmas. She reveals that she practices only natural family planning methods with her husband (referred to as the “calendar” method), and that this method simply requires patience, timing, and *self-discipline*.

When she later provides me an account of her educational background, Lydia explains how she was required to wake up at 5am to attend her university classes (which started at 6am or

⁴⁰ Interview (recorded), 17 April 2013.

7am), and then had to be present at her part-time job after her courses in order to pay for her tuition. “Everybody has 24 hours in a day”, she says to me. She continues to tell me that she cannot accept other people’s “excuses” for not working hard, studying hard, and creating their own successes or financial stability. In a statement that echoes both her Catholic faith and neoliberal ideas of *self-discipline* and *responsibility*, she asserts to me: “If you’re poor it’s because you don’t want to work, and that’s not what God wants.”⁴¹

These examples show us how the neoliberal ideologies of *self-discipline* and *responsibility* both underline the operations of global restructuring and are also used to reason against RH legislation in the Philippine context. In fact, the concept of *responsibility* was added to the full title of the RH Law as a way to incorporate the values of “pro life” groups. Parmanand (2014) contextualises this shift in terminology, which was a strategic move on the part of the drafters of the RH Law:

...in the latest version that was enacted into law, there is a strong emphasis on “responsible parenthood” and the protection of the family as a justification for providing access to family planning. In fact, the Aquino administration, in advocating for the bill, called it the “Responsible Parenthood bill” as opposed to the more mainstream RH law. Such rhetoric allowed the administration to package the legislation in the context of family values, as opposed to simply contraception.

(Parmanand 2014, p. 76)

These systems of economic processes that are seemingly separate from matters of reproductive decisions and politics—are in fact, embedded in Filipinos’ ideas, personal politics, and choices about reproductive health and rights. This is particularly evident in the narratives of individuals who oppose modern or artificial contraceptives, and in their belief that *self-discipline* and

⁴¹ Interview (recorded), 29 January 2013.

responsibility are the main solutions to effective family planning. Again, these sentiments and political views on reproduction display the workings of “intimate economies”, as they reveal how even the key concepts that guide global markets are also utilised in discourses about sex and intimacies. These individuals—like so many others who identify as “pro life”—consider sexual *self-discipline* and control to be necessary principles to follow in natural family planning strategies. But this does not mean that they are unaware of or unconcerned about widespread cultural and societal problems (such as domestic violence and rape) that are prevalent in Filipino households and communities. Stories of suffering and hardship among poor couples and families still unsettle the “pro life” communities and their reproductive dilemmas.

Returning to my account of Charlene, who invited me to the Pro-Life Philippines seminar, I recall her distress when we exchanged our impressions of the workshop. She insisted that we have a quick lunch together after the two-hour long presentation, so we walked to the nearest Jollibee fast-food restaurant on a busy intersection near Legarda station. As a retired nurse, she spoke to me about her involvement in the “pro life” movement since the 1970s, and the work she had done with local communities as part of her advocacy. The work consisted of family planning counseling for married couples who wanted to space out their children and effectively plan their family sizes. Asking me what I thought of the seminar and of the messages of the organisation, I disclosed with honesty that I admired the organisation’s teachings on family values and the “rights of the unborn child”, but still saw the need for an RH Law for those who cannot practice natural family planning without certain complication. “What about the women who get beat by their husbands if they don’t want to have sex?” I asked her, sharing with her the views of others who I had already spoken to in Metro Manila. Without repeating the same sentiments of the other individuals who cited the importance of *self-discipline*, Charlene

paused thoughtfully, but also morosely, as she was aware of and sympathetic to these issues of domestic violence. In her many years of working with married couples, she still cited that convincing husbands to attend her seminars and dealing with women who experienced violence were significant challenges to her advocacy. Promoting natural family planning came with disconcerting accounts of gendered violence and adversity. This conversation with Charlene reminds us that even staunch opponents of the RH Law are not unsympathetic towards the struggles or challenges of other Filipino women and families.⁴²

Conclusion

In weaving together these stories and narratives from the field, I begin to locate some of the intricacies that characterise and animate reproductive dilemmas. In the first case study, binaries are disrupted by negotiations with faith and gradients of religiosity. Religious leaders and faithful practitioners such as Fr. John and Bea demonstrate how Catholic identity remains a pivotal part of community leadership and advocacy, although they also work through their own definitions of what it means to be both Catholic and supporters of reproductive health. Both also reject the dichotomous logic of the public RH Law debate, and unsettle public discourses on reproductive health that highlight only two sides to the issue.

In Charles' excerpt on infidelity and his observations on "machismo" culture, gender norms and dynamics are highlighted as issues that also disrupt the seemingly cohesive "pro life" argument for the protection of family values in the state. Coupled with the existing trend of transnational families, both gender dynamics and fissures within the family unit create a setting where such "pro life" rationales are inconstant. Reproductive dilemmas and politics amongst

⁴² Field notes (handwritten), 24 May 2013.

conservative “pro life” groups are troubled by the *imagined* and globalised traditional family unit.

In the final case study featured in this chapter, the global re-emerges not only in how it plays out in material realities, but in how its neoliberal rationale accompanies and gives foundation to certain “pro life” views. The ideas about *self-discipline* and *responsibility* as expressed by Martin, Lydia, and the Pro-Life Philippines seminar are similarly promoted by neoliberal economic values and imbued with the rationales of the global. The guiding principles of neoliberal markets, which have justified the implementation of labour export programmes and structural adjustment programmes in the Philippines, are enmeshed even in the reproductive narratives of individuals who oppose the RH Law. They uphold global restructuring policies and are also embedded in several personal accounts and views about reproduction.

But, although there are inconsistencies or global market impacts in these politicised narratives, there are also deep emotions attached to these views. The relationship between reproductive dilemmas and global restructuring is textured and multi-dimensional. Regardless, it is a key relationship that challenges the assumption that Filipinos’ personal opinions or choices regarding reproduction are only mediated by the political and religious teachings of the Catholic Church.

In the following chapter, I return to the beginning of my fieldwork in the suburban and rapidly changing province of Cavite. Here, I explore the dynamics of the global and of gender in a case study featuring three remittance-reliant families in the town of Imus. Individuals from each family mediate with reproductive choices and dilemmas, and must also contend with tensions and conflicts in their intimate decisions and relationships that are caused by remittance arrangements or desires to be *OFWs*.

Chapter 4: Case Study - Remittances, Gendered Labour, and Reproduction in Imus, Cavite

This chapter is an ethnographic study of the families who occupy the neighbouring units in the compound where I spent time with relatives in the province of Cavite, just south of the Metro Manila region from November 2012 to June 2013. During the first few months of fieldwork, I lived in the compound and observed the daily lives and conversations of these families. After moving to the Quezon City area in the month of February, I was visiting the compound every weekend.

The daily practices of domestic duties, recreation, and conversations about intimacies (or separations and tensions) and the longing to migrate overseas are delineated in this chapter to formulate a more thorough understanding of how the macro processes of economic globalisation and expectations of gender roles intertwine to shape opinions and decisions on reproduction. Gender and economic dynamics are at play with each other in a landscape that is both rapidly modernising but also preserved by traditional ideologies about men, women, and religion. These individuals balance their desires for financial security with personal choices about relationships, having children, contraceptive practices, and closeness while also attempting to negotiate their gendered roles in daily life.

I also discuss how remittances that flow into the households from overseas create a beneficial support system for the families but also restrict some of the reproductive needs of the women. While this remittance-reliant community continues to witness a lack of ambition on the parts of the males as well as a lack of participation in household duties, the reproductive decisions that the women confide can also be linked to these monetary arrangements with OFW relatives. The fact that families with several children experience more difficulty while dealing

with economic hardship is hardly a new insight in the RH debate. In fact, much of the work that the RH Law advocates have done to pass the legislation has been on behalf of the impoverished families from urban and rural communities with higher rates of population and low usage of (and access to) modern contraceptives (see for example, Ateneo de Manila University Faculty 2008). The link between poverty and the lack of reproductive health services is substantial—the families who seek ways to determine their desired family sizes do so because they cannot sufficiently afford to support more children than they desire. In Imus however—and this can still be applied to a wider regional context— I argue that the families experience both economic struggle and comfort from receiving remittances, and it is this complex situation of experiencing both financial struggle and assistance that creates tensions in some of their reproductive dilemmas or intimate relations.

The tensions related to reproduction and intimacy also manifest amidst a landscape that has changed drastically due to export labour and manufacturing, and because of the visible economic markings of OFW and *balikbayan* consumer practices. But while the physical aspects of Imus have transformed, certain traditional gender dynamics linger in the compound and inform and shape the reproductive dilemmas of the individuals who reside there.

“Iba na talaga dito” (“It really is different here now”): Cavite’s Rural-Industrial Landscape

Landing in the heavy heat in November of 2012, I was once again confronting this old, new country. I was back, finally, and the last time I visited the Philippines I was at least ten years younger with no thought in mind yet about pursuing research or seeking out the answers to questions that I had created for the people here, a decade later. With apprehension, I was

awaiting our pick up at the Arrivals section of Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA). My mother and sister decided to join me during the first few months of my fieldwork, and we waited for nearly an hour in the moist heat as our driver and family friend from the province of Cavite maneuvered through the congestion of crowds and vehicles that make up Manila's notorious traffic. Successfully, he found us amongst the assemblage and waved us over to a newly purchased minivan. His name is Tomas, a close enough acquaintance and someone my family has known since before I was born. Inside the van, I sat closest to the sliding door after we piled our dense luggage in the back of the trunk, and I realised that my journey, this initiation into the "field", was only beginning.

It was not long before we reached the darker area of the Manila-Cavite Expressway, or 'CAVITEX', where we transitioned from one part of the metropolis to the entrance of Cavite on our way to reunite with my grandmother in the heart of Imus. CAVITEX opened in 2011 with its development commencing in 2007, and now connects Cavite to the edges of Manila's southern contours, even boosting its economy significantly in the recent years.⁴³ It is this new concrete linkage and the unexpected speed of our drive to Imus that my mother remarks at: "*bago 'to!*" ("This is new!"). Indeed, we are relieved that our time towards our home in the Philippines has been reduced so greatly because of this new pathway, but it stuns me as well. The Philippines, even this new gateway to the provincial south, is *new*.

CAVITEX is not the only recent development in this area that we are in awe of—we are strangers to the new crowds, stands, small roads, and businesses that make up Imus' busy landscape. When we pass by the *palenke* or the local market that my mother used to frequent as

⁴³ Dela Peña, Zinnia B. "Manila-Cavite Expressway boosts economy of Cavite". *Philstar.com*. 21 March 2012. Available at: <http://www.philstar.com/business/788898/manila-cavite-expressway-boosts-economy-cavite>

a young adult, we found that it stands opposite the substructure of an Ayala Development, the foundation of a modern shopping centre that does not quite blend in well with the rest of its rural environment.⁴⁴ It does not surprise me that commercial developments and more “modern” infrastructures have made their way into provincial towns whether in the Philippines or elsewhere; but here at this intersection, the modern is in striking contrast with a much older setting and way of living.

As we continue to drive, it is still overwhelming for us to see how much the town has changed. The narrow dirt roads are difficult to traverse, but we manage to do so despite the various vehicles that zip past our heavy vehicle, and at this moment I realised that I did not understand the traffic rules for cars, *jeepneys*, tricycles, and pedestrians in this disarray. Some of the streets, while still underdeveloped (many still lacking street lights or street signs) were congested and full. The last time I visited Cavite was in 2001 and the changes that we were witnessing as we re-entered the country were not subtle. My mother gasps again, “*Iba na talaga dito*” (“It really is different here now”), and I knew that she was right.

On June 8, 2013, the Philippines’ National Statistics Office released a report by the Consensus of Population and Housing stating that the population of Cavite has increased by one million since the year 2000. The population of Cavite in 2013 was just over 3 million people, and only 50 years before, the rate was approximately 378,138. Cavite’s provincial government cites major economic growth over the last ten years—specifically in Trece Martires City and General Trias—and attributes it to the mass housing projects, resettlement sites, and the development of large industrial estates. Furthermore, in his study, Kelly (1999) explores how

⁴⁴ Ayala Land is one of the largest developing conglomerates in the Philippines, and has invested in infrastructure, residential areas, and commercial developments in Metro Manila since the 1800s. Please see: <http://www.ayalaland.com.ph/about/history/>

shifts in the labour market economy and in local cultural ideas about work opportunities contributed to the decline in jobs in the agricultural industries in Cavite. He also maps out the economic successes (such as a large inflow of foreign direct investments, or FDIs) during President Ramos' administration that led to both Cavite and Laguna becoming major growth zones for industrial and residential estates.⁴⁵ The monetary distribution of the FDIs helped in transforming much of the agricultural land in Cavite into urban spaces (Kelly 1999, p. 60). With these economic factors at play alongside increased rates of inward migration (from other parts of Manila or the Philippines), higher numbers of natural births, and the new CAVITEX expressway facilitating the flow of cargo and serving as a physical gateway for business transactions, the province of Cavite has undergone astonishing transformation and growth in only a single decade.

(Un)Changing Gender Ideologies in Changing Landscapes

Yet, even amidst these stark variations in population and the urban/rural terrain, outsiders to the Philippines can still consider many of the cultural and social expectations of women to be *traditional*. While still driving towards Imus for instance, Tomas' immediate question about me was directed at my mother, as he was still unsure about whether or not I could comprehend Tagalog: "*Ilang taon na sya?*" ("How old is she now?"). I answered him directly, "Thirty, *po*". He was evidently in shock, "*Thirty na!*" ("Thirty already!"). Indeed, at the time I was thirty years old, still without a husband or children, but this awareness of my *lack* of a spouse and kin

⁴⁵ "Cavite Socio-Economic and Physical Profile [Sepp 2011]". The Official Website of the Provincial Government of Cavite. Pg.13. Available at: <http://www.cavite.gov.ph/home/multimedia%20files/SEPP/2011/Chapter%202%20Human%20Resources.pdf>

is something that I do not encounter often in the Western world. I did not realise at this moment that the question of how old I am, or whether I am married or would like children of my own, would be asked several times during my time in the field and with most of the asking done by relatives and new acquaintances in both Cavite and Quezon City. It became evident at this moment that I would be immersing myself in a place where ideas about women are still so closely attached to motherhood and marriage. If the city was developing into an “urban” setting at an accelerated pace, the cultural expectations of women’s roles as wives and mothers by the age of thirty were still preserved by many of the town’s residents. It is these expectations of gender that constitute and complicate the reproductive decision-making of some of the individuals in Imus, as they also overlap with labour market dynamics and remittance arrangements with their relatives who work overseas.

The Compound in Imus - Gender and Overseas Remittances

The compound in which we stay is helmed by my grandmother’s house, previously occupied by her family of thirteen before her own children (including my mother) eventually migrated to work and find permanent residency in North America throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. The four-bedroom home is built with cool concrete and is surrounded by a lush, mature garden that still allows for plenty of sunlight to seep through during the early mornings and afternoons. It is distinct from the rest of the smaller, less decorated units within the compound because of its updated kitchen and bathrooms, which were renovated with the financial help of my grandmother’s adult children from overseas. The home functions as a communal setting

where the neighbours and any visiting *balikbayan* relatives come together to share the entertainment facilities, including the television and access to Filipino cable networks.

Directly beside the house is a smaller concrete home where Tomas, our family friend who picked us up from the airport, lives with his wife Angeline and their three children. Neither Tomas nor Angeline have yet reached the age of forty, but tend to and care for their adolescent son Angelo, and their two younger children Jono and Melissa, who are ten and nine years old. Lastly, at the very edge of the compound, sitting at the border between the residential area and a large rice field, is a unit inhabited by two families. Elena and Vhon are the parents of twenty-year-old Karen and twelve-year-old Jing. In their early forties, Elena and Vhon act as grandparents to Ben, the infant son of twentyone-year-old Aldo and his partner Carol, who is Elena's niece. While Aldo and Carol are new parents, they do not have plans to marry in the near future. Karen, on the other hand, is nearing the end of her undergraduate studies at a college located in Dasmariñas, nearby the city of Imus and only a thirty-minute commute away. Her sister Jing is usually accompanied by her mother Elena when she attends her extracurricular activities or goes to school.

The compound is hidden behind smaller and more modest shacks occupied by my grandmother's long time neighbours, residents who my mother also grew up with and knew as a child. One of the women living in the shacks—Mila—was hired by my grandmother to provide domestic services, and it is my mother and her siblings who live elsewhere in either Canada or the U.S who provide Mila's monthly salary. As my grandmother is no longer agile, she is incapable of performing many of the chores in her spacious home. Mila therefore does most of the housework and domestic tasks including sweeping, manual laundry, dishwashing, and purchasing foods from the local markets.

This dynamic is replicated in the rest of the units within the compound. I observe these domestic rituals performed by each of the women, and am usually woken up early in the morning by their chatter and busy movement each day. Angeline is up at dawn alongside my grandmother, Mila, Elena, and Carol. She prepares breakfast for her three children on the weekdays, while Tomas also gets up to drive them and other children from the general neighbourhood to their elementary school. Once her children are away for the day, Angeline's tasks are the same as Mila's—dishwashing, visiting local markets, and attending to the cleanliness of her unit. Elena walks only Jing to school in the mornings. Before returning to the compound, she has already purchased food for her family, and spends the rest of the morning and afternoon preparing the food and doing general cleaning inside her modest home. Carol is much younger than the other women, but is the only female caring for a young child. As Ben is still an infant, Carol's tasks also include domestic chores, but most of her time is spent supervising her young son.

By mid-morning, the small open space at the center of the compound is occupied by all the women. They gather here in-between their chores, usually gossiping or catching up through casual conversation or *kuwentuhan*. I become accustomed to this routine over time. I wake up later than the rest of the women, but take my simple breakfast of *pandesal* and coffee each day to a slight sized plastic table situated at the centre of this communal ground and listen in to their exchanges. Over time, they begin to include me in their *kuwentuhan* or conversations (whether humorous or serious in nature) and I had become a familiar presence in the mornings and early afternoons. I began to practice my Tagalog with them, usually using only light or humorous phrases, and this made the women feel even more at ease around me. My attendance at the table

each morning became part of the daily happenings in this small, outdoor space, and each time was an opportunity to share moments and exchanges with these women.

The Division of Household Labour, and the Presence/Absence of the Males

It was not long after participating in this daily ritual that I began to notice the movements/non-movements or presences/absences of the men from this micro community. While the women performed their domestic chores and tasks together (or around each other) and shared a similar schedule, the men were usually absent from these gatherings. If they were visible, their time was mainly spent doing leisurely activities such as drinking with their *barkada* (or group of friends), and this usually happened during the evenings when most or all of the women were already in their separate units cooking dinner or spending time with their children. There was a clear division of activities and spaces that the men and women occupied. While the compound and individual units neighbouring us represented feminised activity and spatiality, the recreational gatherings and spaces with *barkadas* (usually occurring in a small hut, close to the open space where the women usually were) were claimed as places or moments of masculinity.

The common social activities of male Filipinos and the prevalence of the *barkada* is not recent, but is stated to have emerged in the 1950s (Dumont 1993). And while *barkada* can refer to groups of males, groups of females, or a combination of sexes, the gendered activity in and around the compound suggested that it was usually the males who participated in social or recreational activities with their *barkada*, and who separate themselves from the feminine domestic labour that occurred during the mornings and afternoons. Eviota (1992) also presents descriptions of uneven distributions of both labour and income between males and females in

nuclear Philippine households. She mentions the influence of the *barkada* in men's expenditures, noting that while women's earnings are used for the household, the men's earnings are spent elsewhere with their group of friends:

It is commonly held that the earnings of men are directly used for household needs. In fact, this is an uncommon experience. Women's earnings generally go towards meeting household needs, but men's earnings are often ploughed back into farm activities or used to meet sizeable household expenditures. It is also the case that men's earnings go for their own personal expenses, like cigarettes or alcohol, going out with their gang (*barkada*), socializing, gambling, and other women. An extramarital relationship, particularly if this is on a semi-permanent or permanent basis, means that another woman or family household has a claim on the man's earnings on a fairly regular basis.

(Eviota 1992, p.152)

Kelly (1999) elaborates on the phenomenon of the *barkada*, referring to the literal translation being, "a group of passengers on a boat" (p.66). The term thus also symbolises a group of (usually young) people who share a specific bond and who are "embarking on parallel journeys through life", and even alludes to the common idiom of being "on the same boat" (p 66). Kelly posits that *barkada* culture is located within social and temporal contexts, and reflected the changing attitudes towards sex, work ethic, and traditions during the rapid industrialisation of rural Cavite:

The growing prevalence of *barkadas* (gangs or peer groups), a decline in religious observance, changing attitudes towards sexual relationships, and the use of drugs, all contributed to a sense that the social world of young people is now very different from their parents and ancestors. The *barkada* in particular provides an interesting crucible of change and is worth exploring in more detail because, in the parents' minds at least, it is

closely associated with other manifestations of social and cultural change.

(1999, p. 66)

In this case study, the fact that the males spend much of their time with their *barkadas* is significant in examining not only “social and cultural change” as Kelly mentions, but also the gender norms that are present within the social structures of the compound and the specific imbalances that Eviota also points us towards in her discussion. The *barkada* activity in this context helps to mark the spaces of masculinity that are separate from the feminised spaces of domestic practices within the confines of this micro community.

While the women in the compound are accustomed to taking care of the household labour and domestic tasks, the fact that their husbands or partners do not contribute to or share these responsibilities cause marital tension between couples and also between the two sexes. Tomas, who wakes up early each morning to drive the neighbourhood children to school each day, would retreat back to sleep until the late afternoons, long after the women had already completed most of their housework. His working days are limited to twice or three times a week, and since his income is dependent upon the school season, the summers and Christmas breaks are even more financially difficult for his entire family.

Vhon and Aldo are both unemployed, and also spend much of their time doing recreational activities while Elena and Carol are incessantly occupied with their domestic or parental duties. Aldo’s lack of desire to find employment or to attend college are topics frequently discussed by the women, especially since they observe Carol performing most of the chores while simultaneously attending to their young son. Although he is a young father, the other females often scold Aldo for not assisting in Ben’s parental supervision. On one occasion, Aldo is speechless when my own mother offers him advice one morning as he attempts to pass

through the central area of the compound where all the women are already performing their chores. After many of the women's lamenting about Aldo's disinterest in contributing to housework, my mother tells him in a light but suggestive tone: "Sometimes, you should watch Ben so that Carol can have a break and maybe do laundry in peace."⁴⁶

Elena is not only frustrated with Aldo for not helping her niece, but with her own husband Vhon, who also does not share much of the labour either. He is usually absent from the daily activities or happenings within the complex, and the women point out to me that he leaves the compound in the late evenings to drink with some of the men who live around Mila's unit in the exterior, which is only a pathway away from my grandmother's home and closer to the main streets of the town. I discover from the women that Vhon used to drive a *jeepney*, which was owned by one of his relatives but was recently sold off to another interested owner. Thus, once the *jeepney* was sold off, Vhon also lost his paid employment as a driver and fell into drinking and socialising with his *barkada* neighbours. On a separate occasion, I observed him speaking to my mother about opportunities to work abroad, since one of my mother's contacts in Hong Kong worked as a recruiter of overseas labourers. He showed interest in finding work either in Hong Kong or elsewhere, so my mother did not hesitate in providing him with her friend's contact information and advice on how to proceed with his search for overseas employment. Weeks later, upon hearing that Vhon had not taken the initiative to contact her friend, my mother was both confused and disappointed at his lack of effort: "He cannot expect the opportunities to just come to him," she had said to me with a frown.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Field notes (handwritten), 22 November 2012. Translated from Tagalog to English.

⁴⁷ Field notes (handwritten), 12 December 2012.

Contrary to the model of traditional nuclear families having the males or fathers functioning as breadwinners, the example of the three families presents a varied dynamic in which the males do not provide sufficient (or any) income for their households. This of course, is also an *imagined* family arrangement, especially since labour migration became overwhelmingly feminised since the years of Marcos' administration. Thus, even while the males in the compound do not have commitments to work outside of the home, the labour in each unit is still unevenly distributed with nearly all of the responsibilities taken on by the females. Eviota (1992) also observes these unequal labour practices amongst men and women in the Philippines, arguing that this arrangement is contradictory for Filipino women. She argues that the family-household system is: "far from being a power base for women. It is in fact contradictory for them. It starts with the ideological expectation that women can only achieve the main purpose of their existence through marriage to a man and continues its operations through women's servicing work in the home as a wife, mother, housekeeper and emotional supporter" (Eviota 1992, p. 152).

While Eviota's research is based on gender dynamics in Filipino households from the early 1990s, her observations remain relevant in this contemporary setting. The uneven distribution of labour between the sexes however, is further complicated by remittance agreements with relatives working from overseas. I begin to discuss in the following sections how these systems of gendered labour and remittances interact and impact upon personal intimacies and reproductive choices amongst the families in the compound.

Women as OFWs and Gendered Remittance Arrangements

Certainly, it is the females who are expected to do the housework and parenting in the compound. But even more revealing is the fact that each family is reliant upon remittances sent by relatives who work as OFWs in the United States or Canada, who are also all women. Both Tomas' family and Aldo's family depend on their mothers to send them monthly allowances. Vhon's sister, who has been a permanent resident in Canada for more than 12 years and who entered as a participant in the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP), also sends her brother and his children parts of her own income each month.

Remittances from OFWs and migrant labour export have been so influential in the sustenance and characterisation of the Philippine economy, that scholarship on the Philippines has largely been concerned with its impact on the development, growth, and socio-cultural changes in the country. Aguilar Jr. (2003), who again has written extensively on migrant and transnational families, OFWs, and the influx of remittances, stresses the importance of migrant labour and the large impact that remittances have made on the Philippine GDP. In an earlier work, he argues that OFWs are constituted as "extensions" of the national economy and deterritorialised state, yet lack the rights of this "extraterritoriality" (Aguilar Jr. 2003, p. 152). He continues below:

As the nation's external appendages, migrant workers dramatize the country's transborder political economy...The billions of dollars migrants remit to the Philippines significantly prop up the national economy amid global downturns and internally generated crises. Migrants' remittances have shored up the country's gross international reserves, making up for the decline in Philippine exports in the wake of the world economy's slowdown in recent years.

Philippine news sites also report the financial contributions of OFWs, and its profound role in a thriving economy and remarkable growth within the Southeast Asian region. One article, for instance, (“What is driving the Philippines’ surprisingly strong growth?”) discusses the role of remittances from Filipino migrant workers and the strong domestic consumption that have resulted out of these remittances in recent years (Ko 2012). The author, Vanessa Ko, further states that 11% of the country’s population of 92 million (in 2012) were actually overseas migrant workers, and were instrumental in the national economy’s startling advances. As mentioned in the introductory chapter the remittances received in 2011 accounted for a total of \$22.5 Billion, 10% of the country’s GDP at the time (Ko 2012). And while Filipino males also constitute the make-up of OFWs (as seafarers, factory workers, and as agricultural workers, etc.), employment opportunities are again, still largely in feminised—that is, “informal” occupations such as domestic work and jobs in the entertainment industry are largely taken up by Filipino women.⁴⁸ In the case of the families in Imus, it is apparent that the monthly remittances being sent to each household by female OFWs contribute to the males’ demotivation in finding work, which adds to the existing inequality of labour between the two sexes and to tensions between spouses and family members.

But the claim that the large-scale flow of remittances into the country is creating a “lazy” and over-dependent class of Filipinos is far too much of a simplistic generalisation, which cannot be easily or fully applied to the case of the families in the compound. Angeline herself links

⁴⁸ It was reported that in 2012, the highest number of OFWs (222,260) were employed as domestic workers overseas. Lozada, D. PH migration report: Number of OFWs increasing. *Rappler*. 29 June 2013. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.rappler.com/nation/32361-ph-migration-report-ofws>

Tomas' timidity in finding full time work to how he "grew up", and relates it to how his parents disciplined him rather than referring to a larger trend in Cavite or the country. The example of Vhon's situation is also too complex to assume that he is indeed "lazy" since at the time, he had only recently lost his job as a *jeepney* driver and expressed some interest in working abroad in Hong Kong.

Yet, in some households or other local realities, the lack of motivation to find employment is still viewed as a direct result of the regular flow of remittances coming into local communities. In his *New York Times* piece, Norimitsu Onishi (2010) interviews residents in the rural town of Mubini about their experiences with receiving remittances from their OFW relatives. Onishi quotes the Mayor of Mubini at the time—Nilo Villanueva—who saw the benefits of remittances from migrant Filipinos but also shared his concerns about the negative impact of this trend:

Nilo Villanueva, the mayor of Mabini, said he had often heard this criticism from overseas workers. Mr. Villanueva was elected in 2007 by campaigning in Italy and championing the interests of overseas workers. The mayor connected Little Italy to the water grid last year. Yet, even as Mr. Villanueva has sought overseas workers' investments in a feed mill and other projects, he said he worried about the town and country's reliance on remittances. "Many people have become lazy now because they are over dependent on remittances," he said.

(Onishi 2010)

Kelly (1999) also mentions this issue in his study, when he refers to the effects of labour migration among the inhabitants of Tanza, Cavite in the late 1990s. During this period, locals from Tanza continued the trend of taking on overseas employment and fulfilling OFW roles in globalised labour markets. But remittances from these OFWs did not only transform monetary

arrangements in the households in Tanza, they also began to change local labour industries as the “left behind” family members were already receiving financial assistance from remittances:

Workers are temporarily abstracted from the locality but continue to provide economic inputs to local households, which in turn affects the extent to which those left behind need to seek local employment. Where domestic helpers or seamen are remitting a few hundred dollars a month, they are not simply removing themselves from the labour force; they may also be removing other members of the family who can comfortably live on the money sent home.

(Kelly 1999, p. 63)

In this case study of the compound in Imus, while the apparent “laziness” that has stricken the small community does have solid connections to incoming OFW remittances, what is more clear is that the brunt of the labour is still borne by women, and that gender remains a key factor in the dynamics and spatialities of the compound, and within each household. In fact, when Elena expresses her discontentment at Vhon’s lack of effort in finding another job, she refers to “*mga lalake*” (the men), a larger and generalised group that indicates her own recognition that it is not *only* her spouse who is without work. She mentions to me that it is difficult for a male who is of a certain age to find work overseas, briefly articulating below:

EH: I am able to work abroad, even if the work is far away. Him? No. I can find work. The men who are older, 35 years old....here in the Philippines? They won’t be able to find work. But the rest of us, we will go. That’s how it is.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Field notes (handwritten), 30 November 2012. Translated from Tagalog.

When Elena refers to “us” she is speaking about the females in the compound and to the relatives of everyone “left behind” in Imus. It is not only a common understanding between the families in the units that the women do most of the household work and labour, it is also common knowledge that they are the ones who are more employable overseas and can find jobs easier than the men. However, it is not the aim of these accounts to make simplistic assumptions about the work ethics of the males in the compound, or about males in the Philippines in general. Instead it intends to question how some of these marital, labour, and gender dynamics are symptoms of substantial problems of unemployment and remittance-based incomes. These are only a few examples of how labour migration policies have both fashioned and maintained these trends in the rapidly developing areas of the Philippines.

Parreñas’ “Gender Ideological Clash”: Motherhood and Overseas Employment

The gender dynamics within the compound—how the women are expected to work both abroad and be responsible for domestic duties at home—presents what Parreñas (2007) terms as a “gender ideological clash”. Parreñas examines how Filipino women have become so central to the “modernization-building project of the Philippines” as labourers in domestic and care industries overseas, but are still presumed to care for their own children as migrant mothers (2007, p. 38). In her work, Parreñas uses a specific example of President Ramos’ 1995 speech about the importance of keeping migrant mothers within the household and with their own families:

In a speech delivered to the Department of Social Welfare on May 25, 1995, President Fidel Ramos had called for initiatives to keep migrant mothers at home. President Ramos stated: “We are not against overseas employment of Filipino women. We are against

overseas employment at the cost of family solidarity” (Agence France Presse, 1995). By calling for the return migration of mothers, President Ramos does not necessarily disregard the dependence of the Philippine economy on the foreign remittances of its mostly female migrant workers. However, he does make clear that it would only be morally acceptable for single and childless women to migrate because the migration of mothers comes at the “cost of family solidarity” (Ramos in Agence France Presse, 1995). (Parreñas 2007, p. 45)

President Ramos’ speech presents a social and cultural “backlash” that weighs heavily on Filipino women. They are key participants in the Philippine labour economy yet as migrant workers they pose a threat to “family solidarity”. This view that mothers must resume their roles within their households is also shared by both Tomas and his mother, who both persuaded Angeline to leave her job in Malaysia and return to her three children. While leaving her family was difficult and “*malunkut*” or “saddening”, Angeline describes feelings of gratification and a sense of fulfillment from independently earning an income overseas:

AS: I started last year [working in Malaysia] in November until this past March. Of course when you first get there...and it was my first time travelling...it was depressing. I think it was two months or so that I was always crying. I was really always crying. But afterwards, when you get used to it and you start seeing how much you are making, you don’t want to leave. My boss was nice to me, and after three months, he wanted to give me more work.⁵⁰

She continues to tell me about her opportunity to return to Malaysia, where she had spent six months the year before working as a saleswoman in a global themed marketplace. Her previous employer had just offered her to return every year for three to six months to work and

⁵⁰ Interview (recorded), 19 December 2012. Translated from Tagalog to English.

gain income in the same annual marketplace. The employment contract is short, but the concept of being able to return to Malaysia every year consistently is attractive to Angeline, especially since her former employer also offered to subsidise her flights, visa, and accommodation. But she is noticeably and visually frustrated when she discusses how her mother-in-law is already supporting the family with her own income from the U.S, and believes that Angeline's duty is to stay home in the Philippines with her children. Both Tomas and his mother had therefore convinced Angeline to return to the Philippines so that the family could "stay together": "*Eh pinauwi na 'ko. Ayaw nya. Ayaw din ang nanay*" ("Well he told me to come home. He didn't want [me to work there]. And neither did his mother").⁵¹

Angeline herself internalises this gendered dilemma, as she felt empowered while making an income abroad but was later convinced by Tomas and his mother that her responsibilities were only at home in the compound. Interestingly, while Angeline seeks employment opportunities abroad in order to support her children, her remittance arrangement and financial entanglement with her mother-in-law prevents her from doing this. It is a complex situation in which feminised overseas labour and remittances are maintaining traditional gender roles in the compound. Tomas' mother is providing financial support to himself and his entire family, but part of this verbal contract is Angeline's compliance to stay home and be physically present as a mother and wife. She is caught up in the financial agreements and disagreements produced by Tomas' transnational family structure.

In, "The Care Crisis in the Philippines: Children and Transnational Families in the New Global Economy" (2003), Parreñas describes the transnational family system at a particular moment when the effects of labour migration policies were beginning to make themselves visible

⁵¹ Interview (recorded), 19 December 2012.

in local realities, with emotional repercussions being felt by both overseas parents and their “left behind” kin. Parreñas mainly refers to households where at least one spouse—and this was usually the mother—had left the Philippines to become an OFW, leaving the male spouse behind with the children. Over the last decade or so, transnational families have taken a multitude of forms, with parents and even adult children also pursuing work as OFWs. As mentioned earlier, the reasons for working abroad are no longer strictly driven by poverty or mass unemployment, but include other factors such as the desire to travel or become permanent residents in developed states.

The families in this Imus compound then, are a hybrid of the nuclear family and the transnational family that Parreñas has previously described. They are the now *grown up* children of the mothers who left over a decade ago and who have their own children to look after whilst simultaneously receiving financial support from their parents abroad. And these same OFW parents are now working beyond their retirement ages and still making the effort to support their kin and their growing families in the Philippines. The families in the compound are the second and third generations of the children who were “left behind”.

Reproductive Dilemmas: Interactions with the Global and Intimate Lives

While the RH Law was not a topic that often came up at the compound, the subjects of children, love, dating, and marital conflict came up in daily *kuwehtuhan* between myself and the women. Below, I explore some of these narratives, exchanges, and tensions and how they convey the relationship between the global labour economy and reproduction and intimacy.

Angeline and Tomas

The daily *kuwentuhan* within the compound and during community events and festivities were fluid and constantly flowed throughout the days. They were non-linear and overlapped each other—words moved rapidly and made great efforts to take in all the content, and to absorb everyone's opinions, laments, and experiences. It is Angeline however, who was the most candid with me out of all the women. Angeline was my first recorded interview in the field, and the RH Bill had just been passed into law the day before on December 18, 2012. This was considered a significant victory for the many individuals who supported the legislation, especially for the women's organisations and feminist groups who had been lobbying, advocating, and fighting for the RH Law to be passed for more than a decade (Ruiz-Austria 2004; Demeterio-Melgar et al. 2007; Parmanand 2014). The event solidified itself as a starting point in my field questionnaire, and I was interested to facilitate my interviews by first asking about immediate reactions to this important political occasion. But for several of my respondents including Angeline, the event did not appear to have any major weight or influence on how they saw their realities or futures. Their real life experiences, even reproductive dilemmas, were too concerned with or impacted by the ways the global markets and migration trends have changed everyday life, even if they were not always articulated in this manner.

Our conversation together took place during a festive and busy season. In late December, we were nearing *Pasko* or Christmas, and the compound was fuller and livelier as relatives of the compound's inhabitants from the U.S. were visiting and spending the holidays for a short amount of time. There was constant bustle, yet Angeline generously provided me an hour or so of her time away from the business to share her thoughts and experiences of reproduction with me.

I was brief in my questions, asking her first about general demographic data (her age, marital status, educational background, etc.) before delving into the more substantial inquiries. I asked my questions in “Taglish” (a hybrid of Tagalog and English), but Angeline communicated back to me entirely in Tagalog. Her quick answers transformed almost immediately into in-depth narratives, and she revealed more than I inquired about during our allotted time frame. She moved rapidly from one topic onto the next, but we eventually arrived at the issues of sex, intimacy, and reproductive dilemmas. Below, she explicates her own conflicts with her spouse (Tomas) regarding sex, and how her desire for a ligation was interfered by the remittance-based arrangement with Tomas’ OFW mother:

AS: [My husband] would come home and we would fight because there wouldn’t be any food. But how are you going to eat, when there isn’t any work? And what about the children? There’s nothing to eat, nothing...there’s also nothing else to do but to have sex. He would fight with me because I didn’t want to. And now we still fight. I don’t want to because...I don’t know, I just don’t want to. Even back then, I didn’t like it. I wanted to have my tubes tied, but he doesn’t want me to. I should have had it done by now, but he doesn’t want that. And he doesn’t even have a job! It’s hard because he depends on his mother. But how long will that last? She’s much older now. When [the remittances] are done, what’s going to happen? What’s going to happen to my children? I can’t give them what she can give. I can’t give any of that to them.⁵²

Angeline’s account here is representative of the interplay between the larger processes of labour migration, the gender dynamics within the household and the compound, as well as the intimate relationship between herself and Tomas. Angeline describes her disinterest in sexual

⁵² Interview (recorded), 19 December 2012. Translated from Tagalog.

activity with Tomas and her desire to undergo a ligation as a means of family planning and birth control. She lacks, however, the negotiating power in both her decisions about sex and her decisions about her own reproduction, even though she mentions that he “doesn’t even have a job”. In traditional households, income and employment provides an individual with bargaining and decision-making power, and it has usually been the male spouse (in a nuclear household) who has had such financial leverage. Yet, the gender incongruities in Angeline’s reality are two-fold: Tomas is able to make certain decisions and negotiate with Angeline when it comes to his own sexual needs only because it is his mother—another female—who provides the financial support to everyone in his family. And it is the same reason why he is able to also decide on whether or not Angeline can have a ligation: “*Lahat naka depende sa nanay*” (“Everything is dependent on [his] mother”).

Angeline is also anxious about providing for her children since her mother-in-law is close to retiring from work. The remittance arrangement that is in place between Tomas’ OFW mother and his family has directly impacted Angeline’s sexual life, marital relationship, and decision to not obtain a ligation. Parreñas’ (2007) “gender ideological clash”, as well as the workings of the global interact together to generate Angeline’s reproductive dilemma. Angeline is expected and persuaded to fulfill her role as a mother and wife, while the overseas labour of Tomas’ mother is able to sustain this gendered arrangement for at least a while longer.

Karen

During my stay in the compound, Karen was dedicated and devoted to her studies and to succeeding in college. She was the one female who I encountered the least around the area, but when she was present she was constantly telling me about her future plans after college. As a

major of Nursing, Karen confided in me about her hopes to find work opportunities overseas, similar to some of the individuals who had left the surrounding neighbourhood in Imus and successfully found employment in the United Kingdom and the U.S. through the same chosen profession. Her understanding of the job opportunities in the Philippines was similar to the estimations of others who I have spoken to in the field—that the opportunities are scarce, and that it is now the norm to choose a college degree and profession that will take you overseas and *elsewhere*. Karen was preparing to become an OFW herself, and the women in the compound, especially her mother Elena, spoke often about her work ethic and *masipag* (discipline) during our daily *kuwentuhan* in the common area where we regularly gathered.

When Karen and I spoke in my grandmother's house one afternoon about the topic of dating however, she referred to a recent break up and stated that she was single at the moment and not interested in pursuing a serious relationship. Instead, she expressed that she was choosing to remain focused on her career. My grandmother facetiously intercepted at this comment when she heard Karen's comments: "*Hoy, huwag ka mag boyfriend! Aral ka muna!*" ("Don't have a boyfriend yet, study first!"). Karen answered her briefly and obediently: "*O po*". She was polite in her response but we in the room were also aware of her earnestness. We understood that she was indeed deliberately putting off serious relationships, knowing that they would distract her from her studies and interfere with her long-term professional plans. Karen was candid when she revealed to us that she could not think of entering intimate relationships or plan to have children if she wanted to continue pursuing a professional career abroad.⁵³

Referring back to my first encounter with Tomas when he is alarmed at my age and single status (again, being without a spouse or children at the age of thirty), such a moment

⁵³ Field notes (handwritten), 3 December 2012.

indicates the common trend for Filipinos in the post-agricultural areas surrounding Metro Manila to marry and have children in their early twenties. Yet, Karen's desire to postpone plans for marriage and children was seemingly acceptable in the compound because she was choosing to become an OFW. In this remittance dependent community, such a desire is considered to be both legitimate and common, since the OFWs supporting each family are also female. Her decisions about dating, marriage, and children are not drastically different from those of women in other contexts. The personal dilemma of having to concentrate on careers instead of having families is a contemporary issue dealt with women across borders. In Karen's case however, the choice to delay or postpone these common trajectories and milestones was due to her willingness to participate and enter into the global labour economy alongside millions of other Filipino citizens. This again, is another indication that the migration trends of a gendered (or feminised) labour economy is now perceived to be normal, whereas women who stay behind are confined to the existing gender norms which constitute them as ideal mothers, wives, and maintainers of the households. Gendered expectations of women who are either *left behind* or who *decide* to work abroad still dictate reproductive dilemmas and decisions, and are accompanied by narratives of overseas labour market processes.

Vhon and Elena

The intimacy and personal closeness between spouses that are usually required to even make reproductive or family planning decisions were profoundly affected by the connection between remittances and unemployment of the males in the compound. In the case of Elena and Vhon, the stresses that Vhon endured while being unemployed were so heavy that he continued to drink with the other male neighbours just outside of the smaller compound. Consequently,

this also caused more personal problems for Elena, who was already overworked with household duties and with providing for her two younger children. Karen again, was completing an unpaid internship, and Jing was still in elementary school. And since Aldo was not sharing his parental duties with his partner Carol, Elena—only in her early forties—was stepping in as a *lola* or grandmother figure to assist Carol and help care for Ben.

It was common knowledge around the compound and through the quieter conversations that circulated among the women during the afternoons that Elena and Vhon were dealing with serious marital problems, stemming his unemployment. Although Vhon has shown interest in finding work in Hong Kong through my mother's professional contacts, actually finding employment and a new source of income was proving to be a personal struggle for him. The women began to notice and remark on his increasingly frequent drinking with his *barkada* during the evenings, a topic that usually came up only when Elena was elsewhere or inside her unit, even for a brief moment. The marital tensions between Vhon and Elena had generated daily gossip among the different families in the compound.

On one occasion, most of the compound was woken up by a loud and heated confrontation very late in the evening. I was startled at the noise, shaken by the volume of the yelling voices and the reverberations of the home where the argument was taking place—slammed doors and the sounds of walls or tables being hit. The violence, it seemed, was being directed at the surrounding household items and scattered furniture rather than at other people. Still, the burst of clatter and roaring of two individual's voices—a male and a woman speaking in rapid and furious Tagalog—was difficult to ignore. The particular area where the compound is located—between the vast rice fields and the nearby empty road—was flat and quiet enough for the two voices to be heard by neighbours at a far distance, perhaps even in nearby

compounds. The frantic voices echoed, and I found it challenging to return to sleep when the conflict seemed so heated.

The next morning, the women, including my mother, discussed the racket of the night before. The spat had occurred between Vhon and Elena, after Vhon returned to their unit late in the evening and drunker than usual. After the incident, the women revealed that Elena had ordered Vhon to move out and leave the unit. Vhon was now sleeping in a vacant unit that is owned by my grandmother, but is usually reserved for her other *balikbayan* children. This arrangement was in place for weeks after the argument. When Elena would appear in the usual outdoor space where the chores are done, she would neither announce nor conceal this fact. It was a discretion that the women and myself respected, but during our daily *kuwentuhan* it was mentioned several times that the difficulties Elena was experiencing with her husband have only been intensified by their financial assistance and dependence from Vhon's OFW relatives.

Neither migration nor stresses from unemployment are new phenomena or even unique to the Philippine situation. I focus here though, on the continuing legacies of the Philippine economy's transformation into a labour export zone, and on the larger market and economic restructuring that are reshaping both rural-urban landscapes and social networks of labour and monetary care. This case study and the realities of the families who live in this compound are seemingly separate from major economic processes as they go about their daily lives. They are concerned with the immediate needs of their families: "*Minsan, walang pagkain sa bahay*" ("Sometimes, there isn't even any food in the house") and feel detached from political discussions related to their own reproductive needs: "Nobody here talks about the RH bill".⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Field notes (handwritten), 14 December 2012.

But in actuality, the structural factors of the global economy are rapidly transforming their local and social environments, and the outcomes of such global activity continue to leave their traces on how these families relate to their spouses, provide for their children, and strategise their reproductive needs and reproductive sacrifices. The different repercussions of the global were interrupting intimate life in the compound in complex ways.

A Gender Divide in Reproductive Health Decision-Making

Returning back to Angeline's narrative, I was told that while she had been persuaded by Tomas not to undergo tubal ligation, she still manages to retrieve contraceptive birth control pills from the local pharmacies, and that in fact, other married women whom she knows personally do the same. She reaffirmed that accessing pills is easy for herself and for her female peers. This is due to the fact that many Local Government Units (LGUs) were still able to provide modern contraceptives and family planning options to their communities, even if funding from USAID for the national distribution of contraceptives had decreased immensely between 2003 to 2008 (Ruiz-Austria 2004, Lee et al. 2009). This continues to be a major discussion point in the RH Law debates—opponents of the law do not see the need to ensure government funding for reproductive services when LGUs are already using some of their budget allowances to disseminate and provide access to modern family planning services. The RH Law proponents of course, continue to support a federal government budget that consistently and lawfully ensures reproductive health services to its citizens regardless of which LGU governs their cities or neighbourhoods, and regardless of which “pro RH” or “anti RH” administration is in power.

Angeline's personal account does not only reveal her conflict of interest with Tomas and her mother-in-law regarding a tubal ligation, it also suggests that she is the one who must

struggle with the dilemma and (alongside her other female peers) must take the initiative in obtaining birth control pills from the local pharmacies. She must endure conflict with Tomas when she refuses sex or when she suggests her desire for a ligation, yet must also take her own measures in obtaining modern contraceptives. Reproductive dilemmas and initiatives in the compound, it seems, are also gendered.

On a similar note, I recall a brief moment with Charlene, the seasoned nurse who invited me to the seminar organised by Pro-Life Philippines in Sampaloc and whom I discuss in Chapter 3. When I asked what the most challenging aspect of trying to promote her “pro life” cause, she replied that it was “trying to include the men” in her attempts to educate married couples about natural family planning methods. Men’s absences from the realm of labour (household and paid labour overseas) in the compound also extend to the realm of reproductive initiatives. The women take on domestic duties and make decisions about becoming OFWs; they are also burdened with dilemmas on reproduction, intimacies, and with accessing family planning services.

“Intimate Mobilities” and “Negotiated Migration”

There is a necessity here to consider the other affective dimensions of the migration and reproductive dilemmas or desires of the individuals in the compound. We cannot simplify Karen and Angeline’s yearnings to be OFWs by writing them off as being driven only by financial need or professional objectives. As Christou (2011) asserts, migrant subjects are “not stable categories. They are thinking, feeling, being, becoming and performative individuals who enter processual, dynamic, complex and above all affective social encounters in their search for meaning in their...emotional journey of belonging and ultimately physical (re)settlement” (p.

257). Such layered sets of affectations and emotions are infused in the migrant experiences of leaving and returning. Angeline offers a glimpse of this in her account of her time in Malaysia, when she recounts earlier phases of being *malunkut* or depressed and later feeling financially independent, and the mixture of guilt and personal satisfaction that she experiences while being apart from her husband and children.

There are two concepts that—when applied together—refine our understanding of these emotionally textured processes of migration and mediations with reproductive dilemmas: Gorman-Murray’s (2009) discussion of “intimate mobilities” and Paul’s (2015) concept of “negotiated migration”. Gorman-Murray’s work (although specifically looking at *queer migration*) inquires on the role that sexuality plays in motivating migration. “The mutability of embodied sexual desires” he writes, “can sculpt migration decisions and paths in various ways—the desire for sexual pleasure with other bodies, the longing for intimate relationships, and even the exigencies of relationships breakdowns and the need to avoid certain sexual practices” (2009, p. 445).

In Paul’s research, many would-be migrants are compelled to “perform” gender as a way to project their departures as acceptable to their *left-behind* relatives in their processes of rationalising their decisions to go abroad. She finds that many individuals, especially women, are “‘doing’ rather than ‘undoing’ gender” by “presenting their migration aspiration as a duty, rather than a right, to migrate” (2015, p. 271). Additionally, this work also exemplifies how the “intra-familial migration discussion” is a “dynamic, two-sided, discursive site where both the aspiring woman migrant and her relatives engage in...gender performances to bolster their respective positions...both sides are negotiating their understandings of appropriate gender roles within their household.” (Paul 2015, p. 271).

Karen, in fact, may be “performing” the “dutiful daughter” role and female OFW script that is prevalent in the compound. Her preparation for an overseas professional career may not just be driven by her obligations to support her family in Cavite. Additionally, there is the possibility that her intimate practices, decisions, and desires will change once she traverses borders. Terminating relationships in Cavite does not mean that intimacies and desires will not be acted upon in the *elsewheres* of migration, as Gorman-Murray also suggests in his exploration of queer migration and intimate mobilities. “Embodied sexuality—identities, feelings, desires and intimate relationships” (Gorman-Murray 2009, p. 442) also underpin such migration objectives, and ultimately also shape reproductive dilemmas at home and overseas .

In Angeline’s case, there are sets of intimate desires and gendered performances that she is able to satisfy or fulfill while either away or at home in Cavity, but not without certain emotional sacrifices. While abroad, Angeline’s marital conflicts regarding sex with Tomas are diminished, but she must practice or perform “mothering from a distance” (Parreñas 2001a) and “with feeling” through her remittances and financial support (McKay 2007). As a result, the necessity of a tubal ligation is removed when Angeline is relocated elsewhere. While in the compound however, Angeline grapples with marital conflict related to sex, but is able to be present as both a wife and mother and satisfy the gendered expectations of the other *left-behind* women. Unlike Karen, Angeline’s own (non)-sexual desires that quietly motivate her overseas migration (intimate mobilities) are never fully in harmony with her gendered performance of motherly duties. She is unable, in other words, to negotiate her migration with Tomas and his mother and “highlight how labor migration would allow [her] to fulfill [her] role as [a] mother...” (Paul 2015, p. 283). In their extended family unit, one female OFW’s remittances

suffices (Tomas' mother), while gaining the support of a second female OFW (Angeline) would subvert the gender dynamic in the compound too drastically.

Such mediations with the prescriptions of gendered labour and sexuality are thus performed by the women in the compound in regards to both reproduction and the intimate desires that propel their overseas migration. Both Karen and Angeline choose to either remain in the compound or depart due to what is expected of them as wives, mothers, and “dutiful daughters”, but also strategise around these decisions by continuing to perform these roles. The concept of “intimate mobilities”, on the other hand, allows us to re-conceptualise how they practice, desire, or even avoid intimacies as would-be or former migrants, adding further affective dimensions to their reproductive dilemmas.

“Religion is always there, it never goes away”

Returning to the broader political narratives of the RH Law, the struggle in signing and passing a reproductive health legislation in the country had been between two formidable and dichotomous perspectives that have muted the oftentimes contradictory intricacies of people's intimate lives, identities, and decision making processes related to reproduction. The two opposing sides, of promoting either a “pro” or “anti” stance on the RH Law, constituted a powerful debate that is premised on key cultural values and on the pressing needs of the Philippine population.

Even amongst the religious communities and organisations, the spectrum of faith, belief, and religious practices is diverse. We also see this in the previous chapter, in the narratives expressed by Fr. John and Bea from Catholics for RH. It would be incorrect to state that self-identified Roman Catholics, pious, Christian, or even laity communities share homogenous

views on the issue of the RH Law. High-level discussions and media coverage on the RH Law however, have suggested that the country is divided on the issue and thus, is comprised of only two contrasting sides of the controversial debate.

If we cannot sort out the differences even between the members of the “anti” or “pro” RH Law groups, it is insufficient as well to make the same simplistic assumptions about the diverse communities and individuals of the Metro Manila areas and its surrounding regions such as Cavite. The issue of the RH Law is one of the key topics that have compelled many individuals in the Philippines to question or re-define their religious affiliations or beliefs. As Angeline articulated to me however, religious identity and faith are “always there”—they are static and separate components of identity and spiritual practice that are unshaken by other personal views which happen to go against those same religious teachings. During our recorded conversation, she confided to me that she used to sing in the local church choir, and that she still attended mass regularly. The women in the compound all do this—prayer, mass attendance, and religious ritual are part of their daily lives. And although they each, in some way, thwart teachings of their parishes and of the Catholic Church—rejecting relationships or children in Karen’s case, desiring and/or using modern contraceptives in the case of Angeline, and forgoing marital relations (or even living under the same roof) in the case of Vhon and Elena—the rhythms of religious practice are without interruption in the compound or even in the extended neighbourhood and town. Alongside recently built structures of modernity, commercial and industrial units, remittances flowing from overseas, and personal predicaments surrounding reproductive access and choices, religion and faith are unmoved. They are “always there”, even if the global and intimate interact in sophisticated ways and in everyday life.

Conclusion

The processes of economic globalisation and flows of remittances are not unique to the Philippine case, but they have nonetheless changed the terrain in drastic ways. I argue through an exploration of this compound, that the specific combination of expected gender roles (women as caretakers of the home/women as overseas labourers) and globalised remittance arrangements add further complexity to our understandings of reproductive dilemmas in this context. By looking at the stories and daily lives of the three families in Imus, Cavite, this chapter examines the interplay between gender and global economies and their key roles in impacting decisions and attitudes towards reproduction and intimate relationships. The gendered arrangements of household duty and parental obligation are present not only within the confines of the compound, but are also extended to OFW relatives who support their adult relatives from abroad—that is, that *women* are mainly the caretakers of these households through domestic labour or through the sending of remittances. The remittances being sent to the compound provide financial security, but also create limitations in reproductive choices and further intensify tensions between spouses and partners and the personal relationships between them. Angeline's desire for a tubal ligation is interfered by her own husband and his mother, as they both have bargaining power with monthly remittances sent to her children; Vhon and Elena's marital intimacy is worsened by Vhon's demotivation to find work as his family continues to fall back on the financial security created by his OFW relatives; and finally, Karen actively postpones motherhood and avoids new intimate relationships as she prepares to become a second generation OFW. Globalised intimacies and reproductive dilemmas are beset with conflict, tension, and restraint.

Wilson's concept of "intimate economies" (2004) can also be applied to this specific case study, since it offers a glimpse into the dialogue between the macro processes of the global economy and the effects on personal lives at the micro level. Intimacy characterises this new economy. It informs it and shapes its direction. Economic processes—in the form of labour migration and global flows of remittances—in turn, have material impact on people's intimate lives and even in their changing suburban surroundings. And the families in Imus illustrate to us how struggles with reproduction and intimacies are played out while traditional gender roles are maintained amidst a rapidly changing labour market and physical landscape. In the following chapter, physical and spatial changes are foregrounded as I return to the urban setting of Metro Manila, specifically in Quezon City. I locate how such global urban development policies and transformations seep down to the local experiences of informal settler women, and profoundly shape and disrupt their dilemmas in their intimate relationships and reproductive decisions.

Chapter 5: Case Study - Reproductive Dilemmas of Informal Settlers in Quezon City

While labour export migration and remittances are key features of how the Philippines has integrated into the new global economy, its economic processes are still multifaceted and manifest in varied ways. One of these processes is tangible, visible, and physically evident in the spatialities and makings of *global cities*. In attempts to make itself even more attractive to foreign investment, international businesses, *balikbayan* industries and commercial and urban developers, Mayor Herbert Bautista of Quezon City (or "QC") proposed in a public address on October 8, 2012, his vision of the city as the next "Global Growth Generator" (also termed "3G City"), which would be "a place where new economic miracles will take place" (*Quezon City*:

3G, *the next Global Growth Generator* 2012). Yet, as QC heads towards a direction of prosperity, growth, and “economic miracles,” it is concurrently struggling to manage its own crisis of having the largest concentration of informal settlers in the country. They are individuals and families who live on the margins of this growing urban centre and without clear direction of where to relocate or re-build their livelihoods. As well, they embody experiences of economic migration and multiple displacements as many have located to Metro Manila from distant provinces in search for employment, only to encounter further instability and dislocation. They are prompted to adapt to the unpredictability of labour demands and their futures remain uncertain as the city continues to build its “3G” identity on inhabited grounds. Subsequently, their decisions on family planning and experiences with reproduction are formed as direct responses to their unsteady circumstances.

This chapter is both a critical reflection and a dedication to the seven women who welcomed me into their small area of the rapidly developing “QC,” allowed me into their *kuwentuhan* and shared their insights, experiences, and opinions on reproductive health and access, marital relations, personal faith, and sexuality. They self-identify as informal settlers, but they are also economic migrants within the Philippines and QC. The women negotiate the gendered demands of their Catholic faith and with the intimate needs of their partners who also subscribe to precarious labour demands in other parts of the city or overseas. At the time of our *kuwentuhan*, yet another dichotomous religio-political campaign had garnered the attention of the media, deepening the fault lines between opponents and supporters of the RH Law. It was also a moment of anticipation, hope, and friction as the May 2013 Senate election drew near.

In my analysis of the relationship between informal settlers and QC’s urban development plans, I refer to the work of urban studies scholar Gavin Shatkin, who has researched extensively

on informal settlements and spatial change in the Metro Manila region. This specific case study and the narratives of these women shed further insight into the ways personal realities and dilemmas about reproduction in the Philippines cannot be investigated without taking into account the heavy impact that economic globalisation has had on social life. And yet, the configuration of the economic and urban development systems in this area also rely on the labour of the informal settlers who are affected by these same systems. I present this case study then, as another example of the global and gendered complexities of reproductive dilemmas, and of how “intimate economies” are produced and experienced.

Meeting Maria

There are no pauses in ethnography or in the collection of data while in the field. In a misunderstood attempt to create a life “separate” from research while living in the Katipunan area of QC, I ventured off to volunteer at an international NGO located on a small but well known street in UP Teacher’s Village. I was recruited to assist with a research project that would give me exposure to activist operations and the NGO community in the surrounding area. It was while working with this organisation that I befriended and came to learn much about Maria, a community organiser who I worked alongside with on this project. It was unknown at that initial moment of meeting, that Maria would be a seminal informant during my fieldwork, and a key contact who would both shift the focus of my dissertation and also lead me to a group of other women willing to answer new questions about the topic of the newly passed RH Law.

During this phase of my fieldwork in mid-March 2013, my Tagalog had improved immensely and this alone made Maria feel at ease in conversing with me and verbalising the volunteer duties to me comfortably. It was once we were separate from the rest of the NGO staff

members and volunteers and in the main room of the offices that I asked her casually about her new role as a community organiser. Maria revealed that she organises for a group of informal settlers surrounding the Commonwealth neighbourhood of QC, as they are in constant fear of both demolition and evacuation. Curiously and briefly, I asked about what kind of access the community has to health services, simply because I was writing about reproductive decisions and the RH Law for my dissertation. In response to this, Maria opened up to me about her past experiences and also on the hardships and struggles of the people with whom she lives in the community and also organises for. Her stories were affective, textured, and candid. After I interrupted her politely to ask if I could document her oral accounts, she gave me her permission with a smile, and continued to speak freely and openly even as I wrote messily and hurriedly on the margins of my notebook.

The Statistical Research and Training Centre (SRTC) in collaboration with the Technical Committee on Population and Housing Statistics in the Philippines defines Informal Settlers as the following:

Informal settlers - individuals/households living under any of the following conditions:

- i. Lot without consent of the property owner (informal settler);
- ii. Danger areas (along riverbanks, railways, under the bridge, etc.);
- iii. Areas for government infrastructure projects;
- iv. Protected/forest areas (except for indigenous peoples);
- v. Areas for Priority Development (APDs), if applicable;
- vi. Other government/public lands or facilities not intended for human habitation.

(Magtulis and Ramos 2013)

In Maria's case, she and her fellow community members live "without tenure", or any legal property rights in a "squatter" area (as she refers to it) located in a concealed area behind a large residential and commercial complex. Her work involves bringing the other squatter families and individuals together in efforts to resist eviction as well as the threat of demolition to their small, but bustling community by large commercial developers. Finding stable work—or stability in general—is difficult for many of the residents because of the flexible nature of the job market, in which only short-term or contract work is found by some of the males (usually in the construction industry). Maria revealed that the lack of job opportunities for these individuals (many who migrated to QC from the southern provinces in hopes to find paid labour and a steady income) has caused depression and distress to several male members of the informal settler community. The women in the area are also dealing with stress and hardship as they spend so much of their time taking care of their families and also trying to make modest amounts of money as street vendors, launderers, or *sari-sari* (convenience store) owners in their respective settlement⁵⁵. In her response to my first question about health access in the settlement, Maria revealed that there are small, local clinics set up within the community, which are run by internationally funded NGOs.⁵⁶ Yet, while even some reproductive services are provided by these local clinics (which include supplies of condoms, IUD insertion, and contraceptive pills), the women in the settlement have multiple children, and the realities of poverty combined with a

⁵⁵ Field notes (handwritten), 15 March 2013.

⁵⁶ Maria cited Marie Stopes International as having implemented a local clinic nearby the settlement. The organization offers, "family planning, HIV and STI testing, health screening, male circumcision and maternal health services" to communities in the Philippines. Please see: <http://www.mariestopes.org/where-in-the-world#philippines>

lack of family planning information have contributed to problems of HIV, “back alley” abortions, and widespread cases of teenage prostitution.

This initial conversation in the modest office space of the NGO where we met forged a close professional and personal partnership between Maria and myself. During this meeting, Maria managed to provide her own view about how the lives and reproductive choices of informal settlers are full of negotiations between religion and the physical globalisation and urbanisation of Quezon City. Before finally commencing on the tasks of our volunteer assignment together, Maria invited me to conduct a focus group discussion with some of her female friends from the informal settlement she lives in. With gratitude I accepted her offer, surprised at the new direction this volunteer placement has taken me in my research. It is this very event from my fieldwork and the narratives of the women who I meet a few months after encountering Maria that inspire this chapter on Quezon City’s globalisation efforts, the predicaments of informal settlers, and how the convergence of rapid urbanisation and flexibilised labour markets impose on the reproductive choices and politics of Filipinos women living on the margins.

“3G Cities” – Quezon City as the next “Global Growth Generator”

The workings of the new global economy are especially visible in the peripheries of the developed structures and fortified business cores of Metro Manila, where there exists the concealed settlements of the region’s displaced and dislocated. The very vision of Metro Manila’s skyline has drastically altered since the beginning of the millennium, from the southern borders of Parañaque to the edge of Quezon City’s perimeters in the north, and has replaced our cultural memories of the city permanently. In early 2011, Willem Buiter and Ebrahim Rahbari

of Citi Investment Research & Analysis (a research division of Citigroup Global Markets Inc.) authored and released a report announcing the world's next "global growth generators" or "3G"s, which would experience "sustained and sustainable growth" over the next five to forty years (Buiter and Rahbari 2011, p. 4). The countries that were announced in the report being the next "3G" cities are described to be "young and poor" and are also said to be opening their domestic markets to trade and investment. They are listed in the report as follows: Bangladesh, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Mongolia, Nigeria, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam (p.4). Buiter and Rahbari also explicate the "3G Index" which is composed of six "growth drivers", and which make up the criteria for successfully becoming a "3G" economy:

We construct the 3G Index, which is a weighted average of six growth drivers that we and the literature surveyed in earlier sections consider important.

The six components of the index are (1) a measure of domestic saving/ investment, (2) a measure of demographic prospects, (3) a measure of health, (4) a measure of education, (5) a measure of the quality of institutions and policies, and (6) a measure of trade openness

(Buiter and Rahbari 2011, p. 60)

More than a year after Citi's report was released in February 2011 and with Philippine growth indicators being reported by international investment think tanks including Barclay's Capital (UK), Goldman Sachs (USA) and Nomura International (Japan), Mayor Herbert Bautista announced his own vision of Quezon City's future as a "3G" City. His public address is hopeful and constructs a positive vision of QC's future, one to look forward to and which aims to reap the benefits of a flourishing, renewed economy. He states in his speech: "I envision Quezon City to be the next 3G City. Citicorp calls the 3Gs, the Global Growth Generators. These are

places where the next new economic miracles will take place, a city that will grow above expectations” (*Third State of the City Address of Mayor Herbert Bautista*, 8 October 2012).

With several international financial firms supporting Citi’s forecast of emerging “3G” economies and numerous reports favourably supporting the Philippines as a potential “3G” nation, Bautista’s plans became realised through additional urbanisation and commercial development projects. Yet, alongside these large-scale plans are social housing and relocation projects to address QC’s overwhelming and complex issue of informal and “squatter” settlements, and of finding solutions to uprooting communities similar to that which Maria works and lives in.

Informal Settlements and “Flexibilized” Labour

“The global city and the network of these cities is a space that is both place-centered in that it is embedded in particular and strategic locations; and it is transterritorial because it connects sites that are not geographically proximate yet are intensely connected to each other. If we consider that global cities concentrate both the leading sectors of global capital and growing share of disadvantaged populations (immigrants, many of the disadvantaged women, people of colour generally, and, in the megacities of developing countries, masses of shanty dwellers) then we can see that cities have become a strategic terrain for a whole series of conflicts and contradictions. We can then think of cities as one of the sites for the contradictions of the globalization of capital, even though, heeding Katznelson’s observation, the city cannot be reduced to this dynamic.”

(Sassen 2005, p. 39)

This excerpt from Saskia Sassen's *The Global City: Introducing a Concept* (2005) is only a partial piece of the author's influential (and far more sophisticated) theoretical concept of "global cities". Yet, it effectively captures the tensions that are rooted in the creation of global cities—of the boundless potential for economic success and connectivity, but also the struggles of the scapegoated communities who lose grip and claim over their own lands through disputes over citizenship and property rights. While economies and theories of globalisation have transformed immensely since the time that Sassen first introduced the concept of "global cities", the excerpt is helpful to us in the critical exploration of QC's "3G City" objectives and how these goals may actually impact its inhabitants. The most vulnerable in these urban and economic development plans, are QC's informal settlers, who are abundant and also include Maria and her peers. Below, I take a closer look at some of the challenges that informal settlements pose to QC's "3G City" plans, and how the dynamic between these communities and the city make QC a "strategic terrain for a whole series of conflicts and contradictions" (Sassen 2005, p. 39).

In his *Second State of the City Address* (SOCA) in 2011—less than a year after Buiter and Rahbari's report positively forecasted the Philippines' as being one of the next "3G" economies—Mayor Bautista expressed that his primary concern was to manage and address the city's high concentration of informal settler communities with housing and resettlement strategies. In a 2007 study on "Housing Backlog" conducted by expert consultants commissioned by the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC), the section on "Spatial Statistics of Informal Settlers in the Philippines" states that Quezon City had the highest number of informal settlers in the entire country at the time, with more than 90,000 households (Cruz 2010). And as a city that is on its way to becoming the next "3G" metropolis, this large number of informal settlement households cannot simply be pushed farther into the

margins—in fact, the modern developments, retail establishments, new residential complexes, and core business centers in QC co-exist with the informal occupants close at hand, situated around their visible corners specifically to be within reach of potential work opportunities and/or local business revenue.

Gavin Shatkin's work, "The Geography of Insecurity: Spatial Change and the Flexibilization of Labor in Metro Manila" (2009), explores two features of economic globalisation—rapid urbanisation and the flexibilisation of labour and the job market—that in this case, work hand in hand in creating the precarious living conditions for informal settlers. Again, these informal settlers include individuals and families who do not have the "legal" rights in occupying land that has been purchased and privatised by commercial developers, or is owned by the government. In analysing the human geography of informal settlers in the Metro Manila area, Shatkin cites that the uncertainty, "casualness", and precariousness of paid work for informal settlers (both employed and searching for employment), are key contributors to the locations and compositions of informal settlements in these urban Philippine districts:

To cite a few examples, labor flexibilization and the consequent sporadic and insecure nature of employment confronts households with dilemmas about whether families should move closer to the locations of temporary contract positions, whether household members should tolerate extremely long commutes in order to hold on to a permanent job, and whether women should seek employment in the wage-earning workforce or engage in marginal informal economic activity.

(Shatkin 2009, p. 385)

The ways in which labour has been "flexibilized" in the Metro Manila region (but also in the Philippines in general) are elaborate. Shatkin specifically looks at the contractualisation of labour, the use of age and gender limits in hiring procedures, and the reduction of union

membership or organised labour unions (p. 388). These changes in labour relations and hiring procedures therefore result in workers without permanent roles, benefits, a lack of unionised rights, and large portions of the community who cannot find work in Metro Manila because they do not fulfill certain age and gender requirements:

What emerged clearly in the findings was that changes in labor relations, specifically the growing use by both private companies and the public sector of temporary contractual labor, and the use of age and gender limits to restrict access to employment, profoundly impacted spatial change and resultant issues confronting low-income households in Metro Manila.

(Shatkin 2009, p. 385)

As Shatkin describes these dual processes (and in regards to how even global markets operate)—the “growth” and construction of these cities rely on the informal and contractual labour of the remaining Filipinos who are not working abroad as OFWs. In turn, unemployed Filipinos—in response to these characteristics and demands of the labour market economy—must adhere to the flexibilised nature of labour relations in order to somehow make an income for themselves and their families.

Many of the informal settler communities therefore situate themselves close to these developing spaces as a way to be adaptive to this flexibilisation, even if the living conditions in these spaces are at subpar standards. These modern and developed areas and the “squatter” communities that loom just at their borders therefore reflect the co-dependent relationship between the informal settler community and the flexibilised labour economy. Shatkin describes in more detail the types of urban conditions and living situations that informal settler communities endure as a strategy for being closer to employment opportunities:

Informal settlements often persist tenaciously in central cities on whatever foothold they may find—frequently on hazardous land such as canals and in the right of way of rail lines and major roads—due to the necessity of being close to sources of employment. However, anecdotal evidence does seem to indicate that growing pressures for redevelopment may be pushing informal settlers to less desirable locations, and that informal settlers in inner-city locations are making extreme trade-offs of poor living conditions and highly insecure tenure in exchange for proximity to job opportunities in the urban core (Smith, 2002).

(2009, p. 384)

Thus, the current conundrum of Quezon City’s mission of transforming itself into a “3G” city is that it must manage its “problem” of informal settlers—many whom actually contribute to its growth through manual labour and construction work in the first place.

Hence, Mayor Bautista’s 2011 SOCA included an announcement that his government met President Benigno Aquino III’s deadline for submitting a Shelter Plan, which comprises a 5-year framework for addressing the complex issue of informal settlements and for “clearly defining the strategies needed to reduce the gap in present and projected housing needs” (*Second State of the City Address of Quezon City Mayor Herbert M. Bautista*, 10 October 2011). Such strategies included addressing the public-private development of major housing sites and coordinating the resettlement of several families from their informal settlement communities. In a separate speech, Mayor Bautista also reassured that QC’s city government “continues to strictly enforce all laws to contain the proliferation of professional squatters and squatting syndicates” and that if left uncontrolled, could “create more problems that could derail the city government’s

efforts to bring the benefits of economic progress to the urban poor” (*Quezon City Cited for Addressing Informal Settler Problem* 2011).

Although many of these projects have been realised since the mayor’s reassuring public addresses, they have not been without their own complications and challenges for both the city government and for the informal settlers themselves. This again, is due to the fact that the “full development of the new Quezon City Central Business District is a critical component of the city’s economic development agenda” (*Mayor Herbert M. Bautista's 2011 State of the City Address* 2011). Some of the challenges that the informal settlers face are related to the process of relocation itself, which distances these individuals from job opportunities, better infrastructure, and access to certain social or health services that were within proximity in their formal locations.

Janess Ann J. Ellao’s article “Living in shanties better than their life in relocation sites—urban poor families” in the local media site *Bulatlat.com* (February 28, 2014) explores the experiences of some of the individuals who were persuaded by the National Housing Association (NHA) to relocate with their partners and families to the newly constructed housing sites that were built specifically for them. Their former “shanties” were then demolished in order to make way for Quezon City’s Central Business District (CBD). After relocating to Rodriguez, Rizal (alongside 242 other families) a woman named Jennie Espacio laments to the author about having no water or electricity supply in her new housing community. Another relocated informal settler claims that it is now more difficult to maintain a local business in the relocation site because his own neighbours do not have the means to purchase items from his store. Lastly, one man complains about losing his construction job when he could not report to his employer during the few days his previous home was being demolished (Ellao 2014).

The demotions involved in the CBD's development have also incited violent protests and acts of resistance from the large informal settler communities in Quezon City. Mayor Bautista's plans of social housing development and relocation for the urban poor did involve approximately 70 local dialogues and seminars with community leaders and the pushing for the passing of the Urban Development and Housing Act of 1992 (UDHA or RA 7279) (*Quezon City Cited for Addressing Informal Settler Problem* 2011). Still, families residing on Argham Road in QC were in hostile confrontation with city police when they protested eventual demolition in late January and early February 2014. RA 7279's broad purpose is to ensure that 20% of land used for residential subdivision development would be used for socialised housing, which is meant to mitigate the "problems" of widespread informal settlements in QC. However, with the simultaneous processes of constructing a new CBD for the city's "global growth" future, these relocations could not be pursued without demolition or mass displacements of the city's dismayed informal settler communities.

This discussion of QC's strategies for transforming itself into a "3G" city and of also having to resolve its issue of relocating and rehousing informal settler communities serves as contextual backdrop for further understanding the predicaments of Maria and the women from the *kuwentuhan* session, who I discuss in the following sections. With more insight into the spatial changes, labour market requirements, and housing complications that are occurring in contemporary QC, we see how global economic restructuring once again penetrates the more intimate aspects of individuals' lived experiences. The women's narratives and accounts reveal how the city's "3G" developments affect their decision-making in reproduction, relationships, and even religious practice. Divisions between the personal and political and the

intimate and global are again, imprecise. Below, I begin to delineate the details that emerged from the session of *kuwentuhan* in Maria's settlement.

Reproduction in the Peripheries - The Day of “Kuwentuhan”

Nearing the May 2013 Elections and the White and Purple Vote Movements

On the day I am scheduled to conduct the *kuwentuhan* session with Maria and her female peers from the informal settlement in a northern *barangay* of Quezon City, the Philippines is two short days away from its Senatorial Election Day, May 10, 2013. The political climate is tense, and one of the major issues that are dividing (and bringing large masses of communities together) is the future of the RH Law. At this point, it has already been nearly two months since the Philippine Supreme Court had imposed a Status Quo Ante Order (SQOA) on the law's Implementation of Rules and Regulations (IRR).

There was a number of notable political campaigns during election season that surrounded the status of the RH legislation. In February of 2013 (approximately one month prior to meeting Maria), the Diocese of Bacolod headed by Bishop Vicente Navarra initiated the “Team *Buhay*” (“Team Life”) versus “Team *Patay*” (“Team Death”) awareness campaign by hanging large tarpaulins with the names of Senatorial Candidates who either opposed or supported the RH Law with the intent of informing the public on which “team” they were voting for at the May 2013 Senatorial Elections (*Sliced? Team Patay poster still illegal – Comelec 2013*). The campaign generated national media coverage, suppressing a reality of religious pluralism and varied opinions about the RH Law and amplifying a rigid, binary dialectic on a national scale.

In addition to the “Team *Buhay*” versus “Team *Patay*” campaign, two other political responses to this campaign and to the SQAQ gained momentum. The first campaign was called the White Vote Movement, and was initiated by the Council of the Laity of the Philippines (represented by religious groups including El Shaddai, Couples for Christ, and the Foundation for Family and Life). This particular campaign mobilised hundreds of pious Catholic voters during the May 2013 Elections, and called for the public to vote for Senators who were “against the reproductive health law, same-sex marriage, and divorce” (Uy 2013). The second movement—the Purple Vote Movement— was led by Health Secretary Esperanza Cabral and was supported by several of the country’s “pro RH” groups including feminist organisations and women’s rights activists. The Purple Vote Movement publicly endorsed the senatorial candidates who supported the RH Law and its implementation. Both political movements held publicised rallies in support of (or in opposition towards) high-profile politicians and their explicit reproductive health politics, making the May 2013 Elections heavily centred around the issue of reproductive health and rights (Macaraig 2013). The clash between the conservative, Catholic “pro life” voters and those who supported the law (many who also self-identified as Catholics) further exacerbated the polemic political atmosphere during this crucial pre-electoral period and also set the tone for the focus group discussion or *kuwentuhan* in the settlement.

Maria’s role as the gatekeeper to her own community and as the organiser of the focus group discussion has been crucial in assuaging the explicitly uneven power dynamics between the research informants and myself. Maria not only invited me to conduct the focus group or *kuwentuhan* with the women in her informal settlement, she also took charge of logistical details (e.g. proposing the date and time of the group discussion) and recruited the other women herself. The women then, were already aware of my intent to record the discussion for this dissertation

prior to my arrival at their community. Maria—who was already a trusted friend and the designated community organiser to the women—was present not only as a participant during the group meeting, but also led the discussion and expanded on many of my questions in fluent Tagalog (I asked questions using simpler Tagalog phrases). This particular dynamic facilitated my acceptance into this space of *kuwentuhan*.

Other researchers who have conducted fieldwork in marginalised areas of the Philippines have related this facilitation to a “collective identity” that is characteristic of Filipino culture. Such researchers include Narag and Maxwell (2014), who found that if a “reputable” community member welcomes or endorses an outsider to their community, the other members will “welcome the new member usually without reservations” (p. 313). These women therefore invited and permitted me into their shared community, and openly offered me a glimpse into their personal livelihoods. In that sense, the power dynamic was shifted in their favour, as I was the individual *outsider* being welcomed into their *inside* circle. Again, while this alone could not disrupt the existing power relations between this group of female informants and myself (e.g. underprivileged versus privileged), it was crucial in allowing for a much less exploitative research approach towards the discussions or *kuwento*. I thus took on a secondary role during the discussion and allowed the women to exchange between themselves, myself, and to Maria, while only interrupting to ask open-ended questions, listening actively to the responses, and making written notes.

Far Behind Commercial Zones - Meeting the Women

Shortly after meeting Maria at the volunteer office, where we usually convene and have been working together for over two months, she is seated with me in the car and directing us

(myself and a family friend driving us in my relative's vehicle) away from the neighbourhood of UP Teacher's Village and into Commonwealth Avenue's large, iconic roundabout. The drive to Maria's settlement is longer than expected, and I am apprehensive at the thought of conducting a focus group discussion with women who I have not yet met or corresponded with, in an area of QC not yet known to me. Yet although I am anxious, I am trusting of Maria and appreciative of her invitation for me to visit her community and to speak with women who she is close to and comfortable with.

We are headed to a large residential area where she claims they are building large estates, and enter small, hidden roads that continue on to her settlement. Being so near to Election Day, I take notice of the proliferation of political campaign posters on every stop sign, window, gate, and door. The roads—while well built with smooth, strong concrete—are becoming narrower as we head further into Maria's concealed neighbourhood. The landscape is no different from the rest of the areas I have visited around Quezon City, except for the fact that the lengthy, narrow roads beyond the commercial and real estate sectors indicate that the settlement I am visiting truly is obscured to the regular drivers and passersby.

The settlement itself is slightly crowded as we are heading into the late and busy morning. School is out, so the children and adolescents are on the streets, socialising or playing amongst themselves. We are finally driving on what appears to be the main road of the neighbourhood (still so narrow, that we are in such close proximity to the fresh produce stands and the market goers) and Maria welcomes me proudly to her home: *"Ito ang atin community!"* ("This is our community!")

We arrive at last, and I am led into the Barangay Community Centre. Maria had informed me in the past that other NGO researchers usually visit and conduct their own focus

group discussions in the same small space. This fact also indicated to me that the women who I was about to meet were already accustomed to participating in similar group discussions in the form of *kuwentuhan*. The building itself is centrally positioned, surrounded by the shanty homes of the residents—the small units are modest, built with thin metal roofs and occupied by large families with both young children and growing adolescents.

I wait for Maria to gather the women from their homes and bring them into the meeting room, and they each enter one by one. The women find their places at a long, plastic, boardroom-sized table. Maria is situated at the head of the table, and I am beside her at one of the corners, allowing her to lead the discussion and signify to the women that I am co-conducting the *kuwentuhan* as Maria's partner and visiting guest. After a short period of informal exchanges between the group, Maria introduces me to the women, and they look at me curiously but warmly. Both Maria and I reiterate that I am conducting the focus group discussion in order to obtain more experiences and views on the RH Law. I pull out my voice recorder and place it at the center of the table, hoping that there will be minimal background noise and that the discussion will be organised and efficiently executed (much of this is in Maria's hands). As the eight of us sit at the table, looking at each other eagerly and still trying to mediate the mild unease of the situation, one of the women cheerfully initiates the commencement of the discussion: "Okay, game!" This immediately breaks the tension and the room is suddenly full of laughter. I take an extended breath and hit the record button.

Incongruent Understandings of "Pro" and "Anti"

As we look intently at each other, Maria prompts the woman to her right to begin with introductions. Each of them states their name and age, and ends their introduction with the

number of children they have, which provides opportunities to transition into more in-depth conversations about motherhood, marriage, and reproduction. What is striking so early on in the discussion however, is how some of the women define being “anti RH” or “pro RH”. I realise that the usage of these two particular terms is done so incoherently and incorrectly.

Marianne for instance, is in her early 40s and already has seven children. She works as a launderer in the community and her two eldest children are already in college. She praises her husband for constantly searching for work and casual jobs (e.g. short-term employment in construction sites), and providing income to their large family, however incremental. She is proud of this arrangement, and credits hard work and discipline to their collaborative efforts in supporting their children: “*Ganun naman yun. Kung masipag ka lang, hindi kayo maging ganyan*” (“That’s how it is, if you are disciplined, you won’t have problems”). We learn however, that Marianne had made the recent decision to undergo a ligation, as having more than seven children would be too difficult to manage for her and her husband. She says this in English to attend to my own linguistic comprehension, not yet aware that I can fully understand Tagalog, and even executes this with humour: “I closed the door!” she declares, to which we all respond to with laughter. But when Maria and I ask her if she agrees or disagrees with the RH Law, she firmly claims that she is “anti RH”.

Anna is younger than everyone else in the group but does not explicitly reveal her age. She has two children, and explains to us that having more than this modest number would be too distressing, financially. She is currently unemployed—shy to mention this to myself and to speak of it out loud in our circle—and her partner is also frustrated at the lack of employment opportunities. She tells us that her partner makes money by driving a *tricycle*—he offers to take locals around in this commonly used mode of transport, but the daily wage is modest with each

ride costing only 20 to 25 pesos. Anna affirms to the group that she also identifies as being “anti” the RH Law, but her explanation is just as contradictory as that of Marianne’s. She bemoans the large number of unwanted pregnancies of her friends and neighbours, which is an argument incessantly propounded by the organised groups who actually *support* the law. And the poverty that she witnesses from unwanted pregnancies is haunting, as Anna describes how her daily routines around the settlement include seeing too many scattered children living “*sa mga gilid*” (“in the street corners”). But Anna nonetheless, rejects modern contraceptives even though she recognises that such a law could help the individuals she knows, and their overwhelming tasks as parents to several children. She states that if a woman does not want to get pregnant, then she must discuss the issue with her partner. Thus, similar to the expressions of the individuals from Chapter 3, Anna argues that *self-discipline* or being *masipag* remains critical to family planning, rather than dependence on modern contraceptives.

Rose, who is seated beside Anna, quickly inserts her opinion and her agreement with Anna’s sentiment. “*Anti RH din ako!*” (“I am also Anti RH”), she proclaims, but she also begins to tell us about her own family arrangement. She is 43 years old with three sons, and has been separated from her husband for nearly 10 years. She tells us that while she was still with her husband, she did not enjoy using contraceptives (condoms or birth control pills), which led to conflicts with him about sex and intimacy. Eventually, these discussions about intimacy caused tensions in their marriage and instead of continuing to fight with her husband, Rose decided to leave him. As she explains her reasons for being “anti RH”, Rose criticises the current situation of there not being enough employment opportunities for the large Filipino population, which is also inconsistent with the actual objectives of RH opponents.

It is at this point that Maria intervenes in the discussion and corrects the women. She explains that those who identify as being “anti RH”, *do* generally approve of large families and a high rate of population. This is an interesting moment in our *kuwentuhan*, as Maria has complained to me in the past about the *separateness* of the high-level discussions from the local conversations about the RH Law amongst common Filipinos. The public debates that are showcased in the Philippine media do not—in Maria’s view—connect with the “concrete reality” of people’s lives, a reality also discovered by Curato and Ong (2014). The debates exist in a detached forum, inaccessible to many common Filipinos whose everyday routines are far removed from the rhetorical and linguistic battling between the two political sides of the RH Law. Thus, even the very language and system of using the terms “pro” and “anti” as markers of political or personal identification are not fully defined or clear to the women, as conveyed through the examples of Anna, Marianne, and Rose. Their definitions of being “anti” or “pro” are indistinct and even contradictory, such as in the case of Marianne who affirms that she is “anti RH” even though she had already undergone tubal ligation.

When we discuss this identification later on in the discussion (and after Maria had already clarified the two terms), Marianne responds: “*I changed my mind, syempre pag marami kang anak, may mag aaral, may college...Mahal na, diba?*” (“I changed my mind...of course, when you have many children, they study, they go to college...it’s expensive isn’t it?”). After navigating through the misunderstandings and incoherencies of the terms used in political debates, Marianne’s reproductive dilemmas are characterised by a *change of mind* rather than a fixed, static resolve. As Marianne’s financial situation changed alongside the increasing number of children she and her husband were having, other methods of contraception became necessary to sustain their financial livelihood. So while she still advises on the value of *self-discipline*—of

being *masipag*—Marianne’s family planning practices also involved obtaining a tubal ligation from a local hospital once she had “changed her mind”.

Rather than viewing these accounts as examples of hypocrisy or inconsistency, it is more useful to consider how they provide insight into how language and political terminology are actually used by ordinary women. This does not in any way mean that the women are not exposed to the impacts of such political concerns—on the contrary, they respond fully to the social problems that are evident to them in their everyday lives. They complain about the lack of jobs in the city, the emotional and physical difficulties of supporting too many children, including as Anna mentions, the challenge of having to feed them every day. The practice of labeling or self-identifying in an “either/or” fashion in regards to reproductive health politics is simply not applicable to these women. We see in the next section, how the terms “anti” and “pro” are further rejected by the women when the topic of religion and the Catholic Church’s stance on the RH Law are discussed. Although the women use the terms “anti” and “pro” incorrectly, they are nonetheless exposed to the acrimony of the debates in their religious spaces and communities. And as a result, their gendered experiences of shame, guilt, and remorse are heightened and become conjoined with their past or current reproductive choices.

“Mahirap Pa Rin”—Religion and Reproductive Dilemmas

Ruby and Evelyn are not opposed to use modern contraceptives, but are cautious nonetheless of the different options and how they might affect their health. Ruby is 33 years old, and discloses to us that she has a total of nine children. While in her previous marriage, Ruby gave birth to four children, including a set of twins, and had five children with her current partner. Instead of opting for a ligation or using birth control pills, she takes injectable

contraceptives every three months since she is worried that the birth control pill may cause blood clotting. Evelyn, who is seated next to me at the table, explicitly states she is “pro RH” and that she is taking the birth control pills. With six children, she no longer wants to get pregnant but at the same time she feels “so lucky” because her in-laws help with taking care of her children and providing food and basic household items.

Evelyn chooses to take contraceptive pills since refusing sex with her husband mostly results in conflict or arguments with him. Still, she finds it petty to fight with her husband about sex: “*Pati ba yan pinaawayan mo 'ko?*” (“Even *that*, you’re going to fight about with me?”). While the topic of her domestic arguments is serious, she shares these personal accounts in a light and carefree tone, even saying with laughter that there are “other things in the world” to fight about rather than sex.⁵⁷ It is her humour and relaxed tone that warm the space of the *kuwentuhan*, and I credit her for effortlessly putting the women and myself at ease in our discussion. Based on my experiences in the field, much of what is disclosed in such conversations is almost never stated without an accompanying jest. The light-heartedness of *kuwentuhan* is oftentimes necessary in order for the more grim details of intimate life to emerge and be articulated.

Still, stories about sex, marital relations, and reproductive choices are not always shared in such a light fashion. Before inviting me to the informal settler community, Maria revealed that she had made a decision a few years ago to have an abortion. She recounted her story of leaving the southern provinces to seek employment in Metro Manila to me, in the same NGO building where we first met each other. Shortly after finding employment, Maria became pregnant unexpectedly and unplanned, as so many women in the Philippines do. The pregnancy

⁵⁷ Translated from Tagalog.

was causing too much stress to her body while also working full-time, and Maria had to make a decision between having another child or keeping her job and financial well being. As she chose to prioritise her job, she therefore sought an illegal abortion. I recall her telling me this account, while we were situated in the quiet and unused corner of the office that we both volunteered at. She allowed me to write down her words in my notebook, aware that her account would become part of my field data. And she continued to speak, stressing that such decisions are made with profound pain and a multitude of reasons. She was not alone in making such decisions, she tells me, and that she and other women had chosen to abort due to “*marami pang factors*” (“many other factors”). I did not pry for more details in this moment, worried that I would interrupt her narrative, her memories. Instead, I continued writing down her words on my bent and pliant notebook. I saw that Maria’s pain stays with her even though she made her decision to terminate her pregnancy years ago. It is long lasting, illustrating once again that the aftershocks of reproductive dilemmas are never really forgotten. “*Mahirap pa rin*” (“it’s still difficult”), she says. I nod my head slowly, to offer a comforting gesture.⁵⁸

In this same instance, Maria begins to criticise the conservative teachings of the Catholic Church as being too “judgmental” towards poor women who do choose to have abortions. She refuses to accept the ultimatum given to the public by conservative laity, Church leaders, and the CBCP, who define communities and individuals as being either “pro life” or “pro death” in the RH Law debate. When I specifically bring up the “Team *Buhay*” and “Team *Patay*” campaign during our conversation, Maria is evidently dismayed and says to me sternly: “How can we

⁵⁸ Field notes (handwritten), 30 March 2013.

[Catholics] unite if the Church keeps making people feel guilty about RH? [The Church] doesn't respect the lives of women.”⁵⁹

Certainly, the contentious debate on the RH Law and the rigid opposing views of the Catholic Church cause immense stress and “guilt” on women like Maria who resort to abortion. They tend to overlook the more complicated dilemmas that many Filipinos must deal with when confronted with their own reproductive needs in a polarised religio-political backdrop, where even the large number of voices of the “pro RH Catholics” are either disputed or delegitimised in the discourse.⁶⁰ This is also a problem for Maria, because she emphasises to me that the most active members at her local parish are women, and even questions (but in a casual, humourous tone) why the sign of the cross only points towards the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: “Where is the *Mother*?” she asks.⁶¹ Thus, not only does Maria feel that the political debate surrounding reproductive rights is too dualistic and does not shed light on the “concrete” lives of locals, she is also frustrated at how religious groups and traditional Catholic teachings marginalise and exclude women. This is further emphasised when she observes in her own experiences that it is the *women themselves* who are the most involved and committed to their religious communities.

Returning to our *kuwentuhan* in the informal settlement, the women voice similar sentiments towards the rhetoric between conservative Catholics and RH Law supporters. While some women such as Evelyn refuse to be bothered by the rhetoric (it is “their opinion”, she says), others are dismayed at the divisiveness of the politics. Also responding to the “Team *Buhay*” and “Team *Patay*” campaign, for instance, Anna is confounded and questions why the

⁵⁹ Translated from Tagalog.

⁶⁰ When 159 faculty members of Ateneo de Manila University signed a petition supporting the (then) RH Bill in 2012, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) retaliated and asked that they be investigated for “heresy” (Alave 2012).

⁶¹ Translated from Tagalog.

Diocese of Bacolod would even attempt to frame this type of debate or initiate such a campaign: “*Bakit naman ganun ang ginawa nila?*” (“Why did they even do something like that?”). This incites stronger affectations and emotions, especially from women who see themselves as religious and faithful. The sounds of our conversation become louder as expressions of disagreement and disapproval arise—if “pro” and “anti” were misinterpreted at first, there is no denying that the women understand the rhetoric of this campaign. They are dismayed at the language that locates them on the side of promoting either “life” or “death”, as the complications from *not* practicing family planning with modern methods are too many to note. This does not stop Ruby from listing such complications and the social problems that she is too aware of: without more reproductive health options, more people will be without work; poor families struggle more and their daughters (who are as young as 14 years old) learn to prostitute themselves for small amounts of money; many of these young girls end up pregnant until the cycle begins again. As she outlines these dim realities, of the things she observes from her own version of the mundane, the other women do not interrupt her. “*Hindi sila maintindihan*”, she concludes, referring back to the campaign. We all agree, that they do not understand.

But it is Maria once again who centres the discussion around the “pro” versus “anti” stances on life, which brings everyone in the group to reflect gravely on the issue. She says to us firmly: “To me, they’re not pro life because, why are they only looking at the life of the child? What about the women? What about our lives? If they are protecting life, then they should

protect the life of the mother and child! ‘Pro life’ is their stance, but if we really look at it, they are the ones who are ‘anti’.”⁶²

Whether the women define themselves as being “pro” or “anti” the RH Law, they each practice family planning in different ways (birth control pills, ligation, abortion, injectable contraceptives, or naturally spacing out pregnancies through *masipag*) and also remain faithful and active in their religious communities. But they are weighed down by feelings of guilt and shame caused by conservative religious teachings, and to the ways they are called to choose between “life” or “death” in simplistic divides. They are frustrated at the ways in which political and religious debates flatten the textured and complex experiences of their reproductive choices, and the dilemmas of others beyond the walls of the building we convene in. Each of the women strives to support their children, but actions and practices of reproduction are escorted by marital tensions, negotiations with extended families, and having to choose between being *masipag* (self-disciplined) or bearing the unending struggles of the *mahirap* (difficulty). Furthermore, the frustrations felt towards the teachings of the church and “pro life” groups are specifically gendered, as depicted by Maria’s recitation about the *lives of women*. According to her (and to critical feminists), the lives of women are undervalued and under-prioritised in the already distant conversations on the RH Law.

Once again (and as discussed in both Chapters 3 and 4), conservative religious teachings on family planning do not always have the most weight in the decision-making processes on reproduction for ordinary Filipinos. Even while committing to their religious communities, teachings against modern contraception are disregarded in everyday realities. Rather, it is the structural and material processes of global restructuring and economic development that have

⁶² Translated from Tagalog.

intense impact on the real life circumstances of these individuals—and by extension—their choices about sex, intimacy, and child rearing. In this case, the economic development policies and urban planning keep the women in precarious and uncertain situations. Physically and spatially, they are threatened by further displacement and uprooting as QC implements its development plans to be a site of global and economic growth.

Precarious Spaces, Employment, and “Eternal” Migration

The lives of informal settlers in globalising cities are vulnerable. Spatialities are re-mapped by development projects and peripheries are placed *elsewhere* as new concrete is layered on these former inhabitations. It is not only prevalent on this particular day, but is apparent to anyone who sets foot in Manila. Once you are located in the city you are all at once occupying spaces shared by contrasted lives—of upper-class locals and those who once resided in the provinces; of expats and foreign consumers; of the marginalised “squatters” who are part of a larger collective, and who represent the failures of the global city. When I ask the women about the status of their own living situations, they answer all at once, even creating a new conversation between themselves that seems removed from the *kuwentuhan* that is already in motion. The women are visibly aggravated, with many of them complaining about the futile meetings with different representatives of developers and attorneys. Since Maria is the group’s representative in housing matters and their elected community organiser, she locates the problems of their settlement issues directly at Quezon City’s major development plans: “*Yung problema ngayon sa Quezon City, marami na ang demolition sa mga community. Especially*

doon sa commercial zone area.” (“The problem now in Quezon City is that there is so much demolition happening in the communities. Especially in the commercial zone areas.”)

Maria continues to describe how several families in their current settlement had also moved to Metro Manila to find employment, and were subsequently displaced by QC’s demolitions in other parts of the city. The settlement then, functions as a liminal space for many who have migrated in different forms—of the numerous families who left the provinces for economic betterment, but whose homes in the city were demolished by what Maria calls, the “PPP” or the “private-public partnerships”. These partnerships continue to build new structures on disputed lands in the Metro Manila and Quezon City areas, and remove families and communities out of their peripheral dwellings. While such reconfigurations of QC and Metro Manila’s landscapes are meant to attract and become part of the *global*, they consequently reproduce what Shatkin (2004) terms “forgotten places”, or the very areas where informal settlers conduct their place-making. “*Eternal migrant talaga ang mga tao dito*” (“The people here truly are eternal migrants”) Maria says. This revelation is crucial to note since studies on Filipino migration and diaspora has (rightfully) been focused on *overseas* movements and transnational narratives. Maria reminds me in this instance, that *economic migration* is occurring even within the imagined and real borders of the Philippines, and yet its processes and repercussions are still tinged with the global. Informal settlers are hyper-aware of the *elsewhere*, even if they do not know yet where to move.

And so, the families in this settlement have already endured multiple displacements within the Metro Manila region as condominiums and commercial and business hubs continue to be erected on these inhabited grounds. As mentioned in earlier chapters, such developments and industries are being built with the help of investments of other transnational Filipinos, whether

they are temporary OFWs or *balikbayans* from abroad who regularly return to the Philippines. The women in the settlement continue to await anxiously and nervously about whether or not their current homes will also be erased for the sake of Quezon City's new "3G" identity. "*Hindi ka at peace, lagi kang stressed*" ("You're not at peace, you're always stressed"), Maria also says. Marianne follows this statement that alludes not only to physical precariousness, but temporal as well: "*Anytime, pwede sila mag demolition*" ("Anytime, they can begin demolitions"). When I ask the women where they will go should their current settlement also undergo demolition, Maria explains the government's "*Balik Probinsya*" ("Return to the Provinces") programme, in which informal settlers would be given payment (covering only travel costs) to return to their provinces.⁶³ But Maria and the women are still not satisfied with this solution, and find the programme to be ineffective since it does not solve the additional problems of land or housing ownership: "if you have no land in the provinces, what will happen to you then?"⁶⁴ It is not just that these women do not know *where* to go if they are evicted, they also fearfully await the *when*.

Both their living situations and futures (near and distant) are uncertain, and they long to remain grounded while their environments continue to change at such a swift rate. In their efforts to keep their land, the women continue to work with Maria as an organised and well-represented community, and are always present and vocal in meetings with real estate or commercial developers. Their efforts in supporting their children are not simply concerned with the financial, or reliant on how big or small their families are. The women here are at constant unease as QC's spaces—the ways in which they are mapped out for residences, businesses,

⁶³ The "Balik Probinsya" was developed by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). It is a strategy to "decongest" Metro Manila by offering free transportation for informal settlers to return to the provincial areas of the Philippines.

⁶⁴ Translated from Tagalog.

industries and “forgotten places”—are altering in ways that considerably impact the livelihood of informal settlers.

But the circumstances of these women are further complicated when the topic of their spouses or partners’ work arrangements are brought up in the discussion. Labour demands in Metro Manila and how it relies on casual and flexibilised labour is instrumental in how some of the women’s partners actually find employment. Many of these men find work in the construction industry. Alabang for instance, continues to develop as brightly coloured residencies for *balikbayans* and expats are built in large numbers. Neighbourhoods in this area are so unlike the compounds that loom just 20 minutes away by vehicle—I know this because my relatives and I drive these distances and notice how we ourselves transition through separate worlds. From the compound in Imus to the commercial centre of Alabang, we feel ourselves entering a different reality and alter our own appearances to *blend in* to these modern surroundings. My mother will adorn herself with designer bags and make sure to wear her lipstick; I will be certain to wear jeans and a blouse rather than the commonly worn loose T-shirt. We will switch to English in the restaurants, knowing that these places are designed just for the *balikbayan* or the foreign visitor. And passing by the new homes, the Starbucks Coffee stores, and the high-end supermarkets (e.g. *Rustan’s*) is accompanied with passing by the construction workers who stand under the shade, who take quiet breaks from work and the sun. But places such as Alabang are quite a distance away from the edges of QC, and construction zones tend to be even farther for the labourer who has to mediate with the strains of traffic, and traverse these congestions in the hot steel capacities of the *jeepney*. When the women tell me that some of their husbands find work in construction, I immediately envision the labour and the expansive distances between work and home.

The intermittence of being back in the settlement, thus makes it challenging for both the women and their partners to adhere to a steady, predictable timeframe, should they decide to follow a *calendar method* (as promoted by the Catholic Church). Evelyn is the one to bring up this topic to our *kuwentuhan*, again generated from her skillful way of adding humour to our discussions of intimacy and sex. In response again to Anna's promotion of being *masipag* with family planning, Evelyn proclaims, "*Hindi 'ko kaya yun!*" ("I can't do that!"). At the surface, she is facetiously pronouncing her own desire for intimacy, which she jokingly claims she cannot restrain. But she elaborates on this further, and brings up the Church's teachings on reproduction and family planning. Such teachings are difficult to apply to their everyday *realities*, she states, and as the women gather closer to express their agreement with Evelyn, they mention the precarious nature of employment opportunities. *Realities* then, do not just involve the physical and temporal uncertainty of living as informal settlers on disputed grounds—they are also influenced by how several of the women's husbands work and live in developing zones, and how they are only able to visit their wives and children on weekends when the long commutes are more bearable. The wavering labour markets cause the women and men of the settlement to be physically intimate with each other infrequently and in short amounts of time. Marital relations and intimacy in the case of these informal settler women are therefore dependent on the irregular or quick visits that this type of contractual construction work actually allows its labourers.

In his article "Precarious Philippines: Expanding Informal Sector, 'Flexibilizing' Labour Market" (2013), Rene Ofreneo adds to the literature on informal settlers and their strategies in finding work and sources of income. As Shatkin emphasises on the need for informal settlers to be within close proximity to the developing zones as a means to find employment, Ofreneo

extends this point and foregrounds the required *mobility* and *adaptability* of the informal settler labourer:

The CCCP [Climate Change Congress of the Philippines] also observed that many informal workers are mobile, meaning they move from place to place in search of odd jobs on a seasonal and even day-to-day basis. For example, the landless rural poor, who have no land rights and no fixed or regular jobs, may be seasonal agricultural workers one day (during planting and harvesting), coastal or river fisherfolk another day, and construction aides in the cities still another day. Similarly, the urban poor with no regular jobs also keep moving from one job to another or from one place to another in search of jobs. They could be ambulant peddlers one day, construction workers another day, and cargo handlers still another day.

(2013, p. 429)

The lives of informal settlers are constantly on uneven ground as their personal lives and situated-ness are ruptured by unpredictable labour and housing demands. In this case, intimacy cannot be regulated or structured by the temporal coherency promoted by the Church. While natural family planning requires being *masipag*, the women point out that it also only applies to places and lives that are unhindered by the global and by the *forgetfulness* of QC's urban planning. The Catholic Church's promotion of natural family planning assumes a static situation where couples are steadily grounded, with regular and predictable flows of income. Its expectations of faithful followers also rely on domestic arrangements that are unchanged by environments and markets—this already being undermined by the global, as transnational families have been the common setup for decades (as discussed in Chapter 3). These women seek to be anchored while their efforts in providing income, food, and household basics for their families are impacted by the uncertainties of employment and threats of further displacement. And much like the individuals in Cavite from Chapter 4, their intimate lives and reproductive

dilemmas are directly impacted by macro processes related to the Philippines' economic restructuring as they mediate with QC's efforts at becoming a "3G" economy. Sex, reproduction, and family planning cannot always be scheduled with a "calendar", and are affected by physical distance, displacements, and disrupted intimacies.

The astounding contradiction found during this group discussion with the women is also the fact that their husbands or partners end up finding employment with the very development corporations that jeopardise their own living situations. This is the very incongruity of Metro Manila's urban development projects, as reasoned by Shatkin (2004, 2009). As the city continues to renew and reinvent itself, its informal settlers are compelled to relocate to make room for the urban and commercial newness. But they must also remain close to it all, within the vicinity of the labour opportunities offered by these projects, and as a result, they become implicated in their own precarious livelihoods. Thus, not only are the women's intimate lives structured around intermittent encounters with their partners because of their work schedules, but the men themselves are recruited to contribute to the very processes that affect informal settler communities. The contradictions and anomalies present in the experiences of informal settlers are thus multiple—as faithful churchgoers, the women still reject Church teachings on family planning because of their circumstances; and as inhabitants of disputed spaces in the rapidly growing Quezon City, most of the employment that is available to them involves helping to build the same edifices that displace themselves and other informal settler communities.

Reproductive Agency in Globalising Circumstances

Although this research explores global restructuring and economic development processes (and in this specific chapter, the "3G" development plans and flexibilised labour

markets) as being both *influential* and *limiting* towards men and women's reproductive needs and choices, the participants in this research are not at all passive speculators. Instead, they collectively and individually resist, mediate, and negotiate the terms of their situations—whether in their daily interactions with their partners (or ex-partners) or with the larger development companies who seek claim to their settlement homes.

Anna for instance, admits to the group that she actively does not want to get married to her partner in case he decides to leave her for another woman. She does not want to be bonded to him through marriage since divorce in the Philippines is not legally recognised in court (and as Maria has articulated to me before, annulments are too costly for common Filipinos to consider). In her opinion, having more children (and therefore more financial stress) may also lead to her husband leaving her, as he is always away from the household working as a personal driver. She says to us in the group discussion:

“Hindi naman kami kasal, pero inissip ko, ayo ko dagdagin ng anak ko. Baka mamaya bigla 'kong iwanan—hinahanap ang iba kase driver nga sya.”

(“We’re not married, but I’m thinking about how I do not want to have any more children. He might suddenly leave me and try to find another woman, since he is also a driver.”)

She firmly asserts that her reproductive strategies are well thought out—she does not want to have too many children in case her husband leaves her, and also refuses to be legally married to him without a legal way out, in this same situation. She is content and able to care for her two children and willfully chooses to be unmarried in case her circumstances change in the future. In addition, she refuses to be in the same situation as some of the women she personally knows, who are struggling with taking care of their own kin: *“Sa gidgid sila nakatira tapos wala silang*

pagkain. Iniisip ko, ayo 'kong mangyari sa akin...ang hirap naman ganun.” (“They live in the street corners and have nothing to eat. I think to myself, ‘I don’t want that to happen to me...it must be hard to live like that’.”)

Rose on the other hand, is self-assured when she explains her decision to separate from her husband to the group (as a reminder, Rose refused to use modern contraceptives but also did not want to keep fighting with her spouse about matters of sex or intimacy). She describes in more detail, how her ex-husband is still helping to support herself and their three sons: “We are still friends. He gives money to us, we are still friendly [with each other]. Of course, it would be difficult if my sons grew up without a father.”⁶⁵ Rose slightly shrugs when she mentions that she is still receiving financial assistance from her former partner, and even smiles to convey that she is proud of this arrangement. The other women laugh and tease Rose immediately after she announces this detail. It is understood in this moment that not all women who separate from their spouses are fortunate enough to still receive financial help from them. Rose therefore, emphasises her empowerment over her body (by being able to refuse both contraceptives and sex) as well as the financial and emotional benefits she is still able to receive from a traditional family arrangement. She also remains in control of the amount of children she originally desired, and her three sons still have a supportive and present father.

When Evelyn talks about her own disputes with her husband about sex, she tells us in a frivolous manner that she occasionally asks her husband to give her 100 pesos first. It is meant to be a comedic statement and it is difficult to determine if this is something she actually says to her spouse during these moments of tension. However, she is asserting her own bargaining control in these types of personal conflicts so as to express that she is *not* without power in her

⁶⁵ Translated from Tagalog.

relationship with her husband. Evelyn's account still tells us that she has authority over her body and is able to negotiate sex and marital intimacy with her spouse, even if their sexual relations are oftentimes a cause of conflict.

It must thus be stated that the women in the settlement—like so many other informal settlers and ordinary locals whose struggles are centred around the workings of neoliberal policies on labour, economy, or social housing—are still empowered agents who strategise everyday to support their loved ones and make independent decisions about their sexuality and reproductive health. Agency is practiced on multiple fronts. The women challenge the teachings of the Catholic Church from a position of gender inequality and reject the political rhetoric that forces them to choose between “life” or “death”. They are also active in collective bargaining with representatives of development corporations who desire claim on their settlement, who pressure them to relocate yet again. I learn that they each practice *masipag* in different aspects of their realities.

Maria and I ask the women for final comments or thoughts as we conclude our *kuwentuhan*, and it is realised in this moment that we have shifted away from our sense of strangeness to each other. We have shared details of our lives—the physical changes of our landscapes and the long absences from our partners; the precariousness of our livelihoods (although my own is a form of privilege that separates me from these individuals); and our own reproductive decisions and the after-effects that result from these complex conundrums. Although I know so much more about their ways of being *masipag* in their realities and in managing their struggles, they are without regret when they reflect on their circumstances. “*Masaya naman*” (“we are content”) the women say to me, before I finally leave their community.

Conclusion

At this particular time during my fieldwork in Metro Manila, the rhetoric being used by conservative religious communities pertained to the binaries between “life” and “death”. Political affiliations, votes, and views on the RH Law somehow placed people on one side or the other, and the language of such campaigns divided Filipinos into two groups who either sought to protect *buhay* (life), or promoted *patay* (death) instead. But the backdrop, the changing urban terrains of Quezon City and the nature of the globalising labour economy add much more texture and complicated affectations to reproductive dilemmas, especially when we are given a glimpse into the lives of women living in the peripheries. Contradictions and negotiations arise, as we find in the narratives of the women from the informal settlement. Each woman’s reproductive actions are attended by matters of their globalising and economic realities: the demolitions and developments that are occurring on the cityscapes of Quezon City are actual threats to their livelihood; financial struggle and the emotional weight caused by widespread unemployment are central concerns in their social communities. But the processes of destruction and renewal, place-making and relocation, labour and unemployment are difficult to escape. As Shatkin (2004, 2009) argues, these processes of urban development, labour flexibilisation, and creating “forgotten places” are made possible with the corporeal servitude of informal settlers. We notice this too, when the women reveal that their partners find work in construction zones, that they are implicit in these very processes that displace other informal communities. These are the contradictions of the *global city*, and QC’s “3G” objectives must include the recruitment of the communities they tend to “forget”.

While labour and livelihoods are precarious, we also see that practicing the *masipag* has its own temporal limitations. As partners are called to leave their communities in order to be labourers in distant construction zones, they are home irregularly. As a result, intimacy and marital relations are also irregular and timed by markets and demands of urban planning. This of course, is *in addition* to how they are dictated by the prescriptions of Catholic teachings on natural family planning.

These are the reasons that Maria vocalises her frustrations at the “Team *Buhay*” and “Team *Patay*” campaign, and why she laments the Church’s neglect of the women in discussions about reproductive health. As an “eternal migrant” who still grieves at her decision to have an illegal abortion, Maria’s own experiences exemplify how global economic instabilities, religious gender expectations, and “3G” urban planning interact to create long-lasting reproductive dilemmas. Although the Philippine Catholic Church has been effective in obstructing the reality of a national law on reproductive health for Filipino citizens, religion and faith oftentimes have less weight in the decision-making processes of Filipinos when it comes to reproduction and sexuality. This case study reminds us that we cannot neglect the aspect of global economic development as having a profound and complex impact on the reproductive dilemmas of Filipinos.

Afterword - The Politics of Disclosure and Discretion in Feminist Research

One week before leaving Manila

At near completion of this thesis, it became important for me to include my own reproductive dilemmas in the introductory chapter. Not only because of its value as a feminist method, but because it became important to highlight how knowledge production and epistemological practices are “intimate, subjective, and engag[ing]” rather than “impersonal and universal” (Pratt and Rosner 2012, p. 9). Moreover, I have done this because of methodological lessons I have learned during the last week of fieldwork in Metro Manila, lessons pertaining to the politics of both the *disclosure* and *discretion* of intimacy.

Unexpectedly, I was accepted to be a participant at a workshop for international doctoral researchers working on the Philippines at Ateneo de Manila University’s Institute on Philippine Culture. I found out about my acceptance to the workshop sometime in mid April 2013, and had just over a month to prepare a working paper to present to the moderators and other students at the seminar. Truthfully, this was a strenuous task only because I was still in the middle of fieldwork, unclear as to what my larger dissertation would look like, and still trying to make sense of my interviews and field notes. Still, the exercise of confronting my data at such an early stage at least pulled me closer to what the data contained, forced me to locate broad themes and string them together coherently, at least for a 30-minute presentation.

By the time the workshop commenced, I had completed a draft that closely resembled my first doctoral research proposal—really, it was a stratum of large, unreachable concepts (“nation”, “reproduction”, “global”) textured and rounded by a few excerpts from some of the interviews that took place just months, or even weeks ago. Nonetheless, it was a piece I was grateful to present to other young scholars, and feedback I received at such a raw moment of the research guided much of my data and theoretical analysis for this thesis.

But the many social and intimate conversations that I participated in outside Ateneo's seminar rooms proved to be just as valuable to my critical reflection of this project. The days of the workshop were intensive and intellectually exhaustive—myself and the other participants (from the United States, Canada, and other departments from Ateneo) were scheduled to begin our days at 8am in the morning and conclude the events at the seminar room by 5pm. Each of us (there were 10 doctoral participants in total) presented for 20 to 30 minutes over a total of four days. But, even after our scheduled discussions and lectures on campus, our evenings consisted of dinners out with other faculty members, and our post-dinner nights out comprised of drinking in small bars not too far from Katipunan Avenue.

I remember the final day of the workshop as especially tiresome, only because my energy had drained significantly after four full days of social and intellectual participation. I was also overwhelmed by the logistics of my leaving Manila in two days time. I had items to pack, give away, transfer, and collect. I had to pay my last bill at the residence on Katipunan Avenue, and schedule in my final goodbyes to relatives and friends. My driver, Boy, had to make arrangements to pick up my grandmother from Imus, so that she could see me before I made my way to the airport. I had made a “To Do” list of these errands and tasks, a handwritten attempt at archiving my panic and managing my emotions during my final few days in the city.

At our final dinner with each other then, after the workshop's conclusion, we were in a celebratory mood and quite ready to unwind with more conversation, food, and drink, even if most of us were fatigued by the demands of the seminars. After spending long days together and having similar research interests and academic goals, after all, some of us became closer and new friendships developed. During this final evening, I was eager to find a way to stop myself from being distressed by my long list of “To Do's”. So, I turned over to Nadine who was sitting right

next to me, a doctoral student who was at the time, near to submitting her thesis. Casually, I asked her about her relationship status. I wanted eagerly to direct our one-to-one discussion to *girl talk*, to speak of something other than our own academic pursuits. “So, are you dating anyone right now?” I said to her at a mellow volume, while the others continued debates about pop culture and current events. We were dining at a restaurant that served modern Filipino cuisine at the University of the Philippines-Diliman campus. It is a quick drive from Ateneo, and would be much shorter if not for Katipunan Avenue’s one-way lanes or the traffic that never seemed to dissipate. She nodded her head, “Yes, I’m seeing someone right now”. Nadine continued to give details of his name, what he does professionally and how they met. I was content at this moment to be hearing about her new relationship, to be having a private conversation amidst the dialectics happenings between ourselves and the rest of the group. And without me inquiring or inviting the topic of intimacy, Nadine also provided a detail about her personal life: “You know, and the sex is good.” I nodded at her, but I did not probe for any more details. I was caught off guard by the detail, unsure as to how to respond appropriately. Instead, I reciprocated in our own personal dialogue, and gave her details of my own partner who resides in Canada, and who I had not seen for months while I had been away on the field.

This particular moment warrants more critical reflection, especially in relation to how I had conducted research on intimacies and reproductive dilemmas around Metro Manila and Cavite. Although I had set out to explore such personal stories and intimate politics on reproduction in the Philippines, I was unprepared to respond to Nadine’s *disclosure* of her sexual life. It was a brief disclosure, a quick mention of her personal life. And although I appreciated her trust and sense of ease while giving me this information, I found myself uncomfortable with returning this gesture, unready to provide similar details of my own intimate life. Perhaps much

of this is related to my personal preferences of how I relate to others—I tend not to trust others so quickly, and I am protective of the details of my relationship with my partner. As a respect to him, I stay silent and discreet about our life together as a couple.

This moment with Nadine is referred to again later in the evening, after the group had made its way to a dimly lit bar in Cubao. It was a change of pace and setting from the usual places my own friends and I frequent—such as the opulently bright *Greenbelt* complex, or the more consumerist set up of *The Fort*. Sean, a fellow workshop participant and I were in conversation when I brought up the politics of *disclosure* with him, without naming Nadine specifically. “I’m not sure I can reveal stuff like that so easily,” I said to Sean. “I feel like it’s my own business”. But Sean, as he continued to smoke his cigarette near the exit of the bar, rejected this approach. He was, of course, familiar with my research topic and of the kind of qualitative research that I had been conducting in the region. “But you can’t do research on other people’s sex lives and then choose to never talk about yourself,” he said to me. “You don’t have to talk about it to me here or right now, but promise me you’ll talk about it one day”.

Admittedly, this conversation between Sean and myself was difficult to process emotionally and from the standpoint of a feminist researcher. Sean had correctly pointed out my lack of reflexivity as a researcher at this moment, not because of how I conducted my interviews or participated in *kuwentuhan* while in the field, but because the act of *discretion* and the decision to stay silent about my own sexuality and sexual life created a power imbalance between myself and those who I had chosen to write about. I had created this obstruction in a way that I was not aware of, and unwillingly. Interestingly—and this again was difficult to confront at the time—*discretion* on my part about my intimate life created a disjuncture, an unseen barrier between myself and my interviewees comprising another layer of my own

privileged status in the field. By choosing to stay silent about my intimate life even in those separate moments with both Sean and Nadine, I had unknowingly and unwittingly contributed an uneven dynamic that relegated my interviewees to a vulnerable, more exposed position. As Sean shrewdly and critically pointed out, who was I to write about the intimate lives of others when I chose to withhold details of my own intimacies?

Conducting ethnography and qualitative interviews in Metro Manila required a level of carefulness in how I presented and carried myself. Self-reflexivity and positionality require more than embedding one's self in the data analysis and research, and go beyond being transparent about certain aspects of identity in the field and in the writing (for instance, about gender, religion, marital status, age, class, etc.). Harding (1987) again argues that feminist analysis benefits from the researcher positioning her/himself in the same space and *in relation to* the interviewees, and that referring to her or his own position should be done so in a way that reminds others that they are “real, historical individual[s] with concrete, specific desires and interests” (Harding, 1987, p. 9). Thus, while it is one thing to not disclose details about intimate life as a way to respect the cultural and social values of the field site (i.e. Catholic values still being prevalent in the Philippines), it is another thing to claim that such personal details about reproduction and sex are off limits. This is especially relevant when the claimer is exploring and sharing knowledge on the intimate lives of others in academic research.

Certainly, who gets to speak about reproduction and intimacy and who gets to stay silent demonstrate markings of privilege and power inequality. This is not to say that I kept such details completely out of reach or discrete to the individuals on the field and to my participants. Disclosing certain aspects about my intimate life was necessary in order to create more equal exchange with participants and speakers. It was a way to connect and formulate dialogue already

fraught with social, gendered, economic and even political disparity. This was especially important during the times I interviewed or spoke to women with several children, and who struggled with financial instability and expressed the most need for reproductive services. Although a small gesture on my part, mentioning my partner (even as an unmarried woman without children) was crucial during *kuwentuhan*. The details of my long-term relationship with my partner made the other women feel more at ease about including me in their *kuwentuhan* or participating in interviews.

Because my marital status is single and because I do not have children of my own, female participants initially felt disconnected from me—including the women in the compound in Cavite. However, once I revealed that I was in a committed relationship, the women became comfortable in sharing more intimate details and even gossip about their lives (and of those in their communities). They felt that I would be able to relate to their own intimate dramas, and believed that I would understand and immediately empathise with the tensions, strains, and conflicts in their relationships and in their dilemmas about reproduction. Practicing *disclosure* with the individuals in Metro Manila and Cavite was critical and necessary in order to open up the channels of intimate communication in the field. This was important from a researcher's standpoint but more importantly, it was profoundly needed as a way to build human connection. As Giddens (2002) also reminds us, “disclosure is the basic condition of intimacy” (p. 61).

By realising the division of power that I had created by believing that my own sexual life was somehow more important to protect through *discretion* than those of my own fieldwork participants, I also located another set of dilemmas related to feminist research. Diane Wolf (1996) argues that such dilemmas “revolve around power, often displaying contradictory, difficult and irreconcilable positions for the researcher” (p. 1). But while there is a lack of a

solutions to entirely removing structures of power and privilege between researchers and those they research, likely “because no solutions exist” (Wolf 1996, p. 25), there can be ways of moving forward in thinking about these imbalances in the field and after leaving the field.

At least *acknowledging* my own sexuality—especially as someone who has conducted qualitative research on reproduction and intimacies—can be beneficial and essential to becoming a more critical researcher in the field. This is vital in any ethnographic attempt where one is becoming immersed in other cultural, social, and geographical settings. In such contexts, even if feminist researchers are actively reflecting on their own positionalities, their situations in the field are concurrently being shaped the communities they are working with. Cupples (2002) also came to this realisation through her own experiences doing research in Nicaragua: “We do not only position ourselves in the field, we are also positioned by those whom we research” (p. 383). She elaborates on this point because of the very fact that apart from differences or similarities in markers of identity such as class, gender, culture, ethnicity or categories that comprise what Pratt and Rosner (2012) call a “laundry list of attributes”, we are nonetheless also *sexual* beings. Our *sexuality* is an inescapable part of who we are as researchers, and also dictates how we approach feminist research and how the field makes sense of our presence. Thus, even if I was reluctant to provide intimate details about my life in Metro Manila and Cavite, others in the field site were still positioning *me* and how I fitted into their context as a sexual being:

...even if we disregard the impact of our sexualities on our research, and even if we do not engage in sexual relations while in the field, we will still be sexually positioned by members of the host community... It is impossible to escape our sexuality in the field and therefore it should be acknowledged. As Morton (1995) says, in the field we are sexualized subjects, we might be viewed as wives, mothers, desirable foreign women,

potential sexual partners and these views impinge on the research process in ways that cannot always be predicted.

(Cupples, 2002, p. 383)

As Sean mentioned, while I did not have to disclose any details about my own sexual life to him at that particular moment, I also could not continue prioritising the value of my own sexuality as somehow being more important to protect than those of others. The exchanges I had with both Nadine and Sean have made a profound and lasting impact on how I think about conducting feminist research. They have compelled me to reflect on ways to become more critical and self-reflexive in my own research on reproduction and intimacies. I realised through these particular conversations that *disclosure* and *discretion* are both political acts that significantly shape the methodological power structures that guide how research on intimacy, reproduction, and sex is conducted. Moreover, while we are in the field, the personal details that we as researchers decide to *disclose* or keep *discrete* affect the ways in which we collect data and how our interviewees engage with us. And finally, acts of *disclosure* and *discretion* politicise how our data—the narratives, interviews, and personal stories—are presented and shared.

Thesis Conclusion

Data Analysis – Exploring what is “already there”

Metro Manila left me surprised at its disarray, the way it is a scaffolding of flyovers (Tadiar 2004; Benedicto 2014) and high rises, its grand billboards advertising beauty products and fast food chains while its poorer locals attempt to sell chilled bottles of water or snacks right

at the heart of the frustrating, stalled traffic. Any visit, however short or prolonged, is an opportunity to gain insight into how the city operates as a nucleus of interactions and non-interactions, between locals, expats, *balikbayans*, and tourists and between the middle to upper classes with the poor and disenfranchised. Imus, Cavite on the other hand, still offered some of the remnants of past visits. The street markets and the landscape of the rice fields hidden behind the compound were mostly still there, despite new edifices and larger crowds. Here, I encountered older ideas about gender and men and women's roles in the town, but also the newness that the changed settings and overseas remittances were bringing to this post-agricultural way of life. This included the ways leisure was practiced, as the recently developed entry points to both Metro Manila and the town of Alabang (in the form of freeways) granted access to the more urbanised sections of the region. It is possible in Imus to shift to nearby locales and experience the more *globalised* mundane, and then to retreat back home to the rural.

Still, however overwhelming it was at times, how it was not always coherent to me, the Philippines became a kind of *home*, a place where I desired to stay for much longer than my circumstances allowed. Perhaps this was because it offered familiarities to me in different ways. As a Filipino-Canadian, I was drawn to the culture and language of the Philippines but I also found myself in settings that mirrored parts of North America, where I practiced leisure and entertainment the way I do in the spaces that I frequent back home. I was heartbroken to leave the people whom I had met and spent time with, who offered me deeper glimpses into their lives, who added the *personal* and the *intimate* to a topic that was being addressed by state and institutional actors.

When I left the Philippines, I brought with me stories of personal struggles and hopes that had their own obvious differences between each other, but were linked to one another in ways

that always referred to important global processes and policies. They are the same processes that continue to shape the physical and structural chaos of Metro Manila and its suburban surroundings. But my memories of the field left me confused for a long time. I was unable to figure out how these narratives could be pieced together, presented, and spoken about. I was daunted at the thought of the “data” as an entity, as if it was meant to be a harmonious and homogenous whole—a raw compilation of information that contained the answers to this research project. And I was afraid of listening back to the interviews, apprehensive that I would not find anything “new” to bring to scholarship, of having asked the wrong questions, of not documenting the details of the everyday that I was surrounded by and experiencing for several months.

But, in some ways I am not meant to use this collection of experiences to say something “new”. In fact, I am stating things that were already in front of us, already there. Part of the journey of data analysis is the honest acceptance of what has been obtained, of what was allowed and given to me by my participants. A large part of re-visiting, re-reading, and figuring out my data—the process of *analysis*—included thinking back to and remembering Metro Manila and Imus. It required and included a consideration of the larger context of which the RH debate is part; and how some of the local experiences and dilemmas regarding reproduction are—like Metro Manila and Cavite—untidy reactions to the frictions between the global and the intimate.

Thus, it is the aim of this work to show what is *already there* in a way that can allow us to think about the issue of reproductive dilemmas and globalised intimacies in more provocative ways. What evolved were not the words of the interlocutors as they spoke to me repetitiously through their voice recordings or through the pages of my field notes. Rather, it was the theoretical framework and the scope, as it moved towards looking “globally” as suggested by

Ginsburg and Rapp (1991) and then back and forth into the local, only to realise that the two are not separate in spheres or in livelihoods, nor in theory, and especially not in how they are entangled in the everyday. My notes and memories suggest otherwise, and even during my passive moments where I was not actively *observing*, these details were glaring. Data analysis, and attempting to understand my contribution to research therefore required an inclusion of the *backdrop*. It required a broader understanding of how Metro Manila functions as a city and how Imus has changed since my last stay in the Philippines, how their urban and suburban modernities are mapped out, and how historical moments paved the pathways for their religious, social, political, and economic spheres and discourses to intersect.

Life in both Metro Manila and Imus has changed *with* the spaces themselves. My ethnographic observations, *kuwentuhan*, and semi-structured interviews incessantly referred to aspects of life that were interacting with global economic processes—remittances, physical distance from OFW partners or relatives, desires to work overseas, and the changing landscapes of the everyday rural and urban grounds. Discussions on reproduction—on *dilemmas*, intimacies, and political views on family planning—were also tinged by mentions of these global economic products. The various aspects of life *related* to reproduction, such as the *imagined* Filipino family unit and marital intimacy, have been altered by physical distance and dispersal; reproductive dilemmas are impacted by remittance arrangements, flexibilised labour markets, and “forgetful” urban planning; personal opinions on reproductive politics are underscored by neoliberal ideologies of *responsibility* and *self-discipline* (or *masipag*) that also outline the rationale of the global economy.

The RH Law debate has been explored in relation to the influence of the CBCP, which is evidently important and cannot be done without referring to the CBCP’s rigid opposition against

modern contraception (Ruiz-Austria 2004; Bautista 2009; Raffin and Cornelio 2009). Reproductive dilemmas and views will, for the most part, be complicated by personal faith and Catholic values. But studying reproductive politics warrants a glance at the workings of the global because of how the Philippines has been evolving economically, culturally, and socially over the last four to five decades (Tyner 2004; Aguilar 2014). These observations from the field and the details disclosed by my interlocutors have therefore allowed me to put different theoretical discussions on reproductive health, the RH debate, labour migration, gender, and political histories in the Philippines in conversation with each other. As scholarship on the RH debate and reproductive politics in the Philippines looks at the persistent opposition and rejection of the Catholic Church to reproductive health access, other scholarship on labour migration, transnational families, and gendered economic processes speaks back to this literature and helps to explain the complexity of experiences and political views on the ground and in intimate places.

The narratives, stories, and views that I have woven together in this thesis offer a larger portrait of lived experiences with the global and the affective and sometimes unresolved dilemmas pertaining to reproduction. While much of what I have put together in this thesis reveals what is already *there*, I still hope that this research—its theoretical value and case studies—offers newer ways of thinking about the nuances of reproductive lives in the Philippine context, and how it is related and connected to how intimacies have become so different, and so globalised.

I cannot emphasise enough the amount of endless advocating, lobbying, debating, and campaigning that has been done over the years to pass the RH Law. The women and men who have dedicated their professional and emotional lives to poor families who have expressed the

great need for reproductive services continue to improve lives and assist many who still suffer from the lack of such services. This research, although it is unlikely to influence policy—is instead a feminist reflection and ethnographic study on the significant factors that contribute to reproductive dilemmas. From a feminist lens, reproductive politics is undeniably tied to state powers, institutions, and dominant ideologies about gender, sexuality, and the nation (Correa and Petchesky 1994; Yuval-Davis 1997; Sjørup 1999; Ruether 2008). It is critically concerned with how these power structures monitor and police the reproductive actions of their individuals (especially women). Traditionally, and especially since the key international conventions in Beijing and Cairo, reproductive health politics have encompassed issues relating to the moral symbolism and significance of women's bodies to the state and to society. Similar to other dominantly Catholic states, the Philippines' anxieties about Filipino women's sexuality is related to idealisations of the Virgin Mary (discussed in Chapter 1). Modern methods of family planning give women sexual *freedom*, and their liberated sexuality would be used for obtaining pleasure rather than reproduction and creating families, which goes against strict Catholic values. But economic growth—global restructuring and the labour and urban development policies that were implemented under neoliberalism—add contradiction to how the state treats Filipino women's sexuality. As Tadiar (2004) has also remarked, Filipina sexuality became inextricably linked to the Philippines' economic relationships with other states. In very real terms and figuratively, Filipina bodies have served the economic interests of neighbouring countries—other powerful economies and former colonisers—thus propelling forward the circuits of “sexual economies”.

The state's discourses on Filipino women's overseas labour also featured incongruities with traditional ideals of gendered domestic roles. Parreñas (2007) acknowledges this in her

analysis of the feminised labour migration of Filipino women: “In the Philippines, the economy depends on the work of women outside the home but at the same time, it must maintain the belief that women belong inside the home” (p. 37). Hence, it became crucial to use the rubric of the “intimate” (Pratt and Rosner 2012, Wilson 2012) when I did examine this theoretical dialogue, and to refer to the concept of “intimate economies” (Wilson 2004) in my exploration of the relationship between these economic and social currents. It is difficult, especially using the case of Metro Manila (and arguably, the Philippines), to separate economic policies and trends from the structures of social and intimate life. They are in tune with each other’s movements and changes, and influence each other’s formations.

Reflecting on Histories and Context

Reproduction and intimacy, as I have shown, are similarly tied up in these contradictions that can only exist in such contexts—where both strong religio-political energies and global economic growth co-exist in the same domain. My research expands on these theoretical concerns and further explores the fascinating context that has led to a vivid and intense debate on reproduction, and the personal stories and experiences that are produced by (and within) this setting. In Chapter 2, I pair the two historical trajectories that have shaped this particular context. I locate this dual historical narrative, and seek to figure out how the current moments of present lives and my day-to-day experiences in Metro Manila were produced and constructed by these political and economic pasts. I acknowledge that all *histories* are plural in their manifestations, and can be told in hegemonic ways, prioritising certain moments and rendering other instances or events invisible or less prominent. Still, I focus mainly on the events in and

around Metro Manila since Marcos' reign as president in order to locate how the Philippine Catholic Church became a prominent political actor in civil society. It was not too long ago that the Church and faithful presidential leaders Cory Aquino and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo formed religio-political alliances that profoundly affected reproduction in the country, through discourse, legislation, and in material ways.

On the other hand, I also look back at the times during Marcos' administration to discuss how the government implemented the economic development policies (specifically, labour export policies) that integrated the Philippine economy into the global market. These strategies were executed in ways that expunged Filipino labourers from their homeland and transferred them to an overseas landscape. Since these labour export policies were put into place, the global dispersal of Filipinos has accelerated radically and, as Aguilar (2014) affirms, "revolutionized" the Philippines in an irreversible fashion over the last four decades.

Both separate and interconnected histories have shaped the complex sentiments in Metro Manila regarding reproduction. As state powers have hindered both the idea of and the national implementation of reproductive rights in the Philippines, a binary debate between conservative religious actors and reproductive rights advocates has emerged in politics, academia, the media, and percolated down to community levels. Thus, for over a decade, the heated contentions between two opposing sides of the RH debate have muted the more elaborate and nuanced *dilemmas* regarding reproduction and reproductive politics. And these dilemmas convey internal and personal predicaments that go beyond the scope of inner conflicts with just religion and faith.

By referring to the narratives in this research as reflections of *dilemmas*, I also hope to have offered a more refined understanding of the gradients of reproductive decisions and politics

in the Metro Manila and Cavite area. This, of course, is also part of my objective to divert attention from the binary presentation of this prominent debate. While these two opposing responses are crucial to policy-making and legislation at the state level (“yes” or “no”/ “anti” or “pro”), I was much more interested in the *in-betweens*, the ambivalences or inconsistencies, and prolonged feelings of guilt, shame, frustration, pride, nonchalance or other such affects that cannot be separated from such intimate decisions or practices. *Choosing* a side in the RH debate has been important to the law’s passing and inevitable implementation, but the convoluted emotions and unresolved or messy affectations that are part of and relative to reproduction, sex, and family planning are what have led me to locate the links between the structural effects of economic development and globalisation in the Philippines, and the ways in which gender dynamics and expectations form part of this complicated mix.

Gender as the Continuous Analytic

Gender, in its multiple forms and as an analytic category, remains a crucial and common theme throughout this thesis. The overarching use of gender is important since the Catholic Church’s teachings about reproductive health marginalises women’s needs—we see this in how it opposes modern contraceptives, and worsens the circumstances of poor women in the material world. Poor maternal health and back-door abortion remain substantial concerns in relation to social and economic development in the Philippines, and could be considerably improved with reproductive health measures that are implemented freely, and without the interference of religious authorities. Reproductive health and reproduction, as they are and have been in other regions, are centrally women’s issues. But gender emerges in this research in other forms as

well, always complicating and producing reproductive dilemmas and views. It is present in each chapter and each narrative as an expectation, a glance into a social dynamic, and even in how it dictates physical absences between individuals. In Chapter 3 for instance, “machismo” in Filipino culture is discussed and interrogated by a theology instructor, Charles. With this socio-cultural understanding of masculinity being a common part of life, “machismo” represents the social acceptance of male partners to be disloyal to their female partners. As a result, the traditional (although *imagined*) unit of the Filipino family is further weakened by such a gendered social norm, and further undermines the “pro life” argument against reproductive health legislation.

In Chapter 4, Angeline is expected to stay with her family and to be present as both a wife and a mother, while her mother-in-law and other female OFWs supply the financial support to her compound in Imus, Cavite. Expected gender roles are performed on two levels here—OFW females provide for their loved ones in the compound by sending cash remittances each month; those who are *left behind* are still expected to stay and continue the legacy of care as mothers and wives. Karen’s desire to work abroad then, is seen as acceptable by the others because it is expected that she will also send remittances back to the compound, and continue the work of the female OFWs before her. These gender dynamics have important weight on the reproductive decisions that these women make. While Angeline’s arrangement with her OFW mother-in-law compels her to not undergo a ligation, Karen’s subscription to the OFW narrative prevents her from having children of her own at an age that her own peers have already begun motherhood.

I have found that gender here functions in how spatialities are created as well. As intimacy is determined by a complex web of factors (such as the lack of employment opportunities for under-skilled males as in the case of Vhon and Elena), separation and absence are also constructed by gender dynamics. The women in Cavite convene together in the open, communal area of the compound each day. They participate in their daily *kuwentuhan*, which I was able to access during my stay in the same compound, and the women's domestic routines were incomplete without their exchanges of gossip or details of their intimate lives. The males on the other hand, were mostly absent from these spaces—they did not conduct the same housework or include themselves in the same moments of *kuwentuhan*. Instead, they convened in the evenings to gamble and drink as a collective *barkada*. Such gendered arrangements and organisations of space are seen as routine in the compound, but they generated tensions and friction between the men and women, affecting the already globalised intimacies that exist between the individuals in this particular space.

In Chapter 5, the issue of gender is of course made explicit in the ways in which the female informal settlers—Maria in particular—lament how their religious leaders, local campaigns, and the teachings of the Catholic Church undervalue the well-being of women in matters of life and death. As protecting the unborn child is the mandate of the state (outlined in the 1987 Philippine Constitution), and only natural family planning is promoted by the Church, the women feel that the argument against RH legislation actively ignores the plight and suffering of poor Filipino women. Their narratives offer a case study that provides a fuller depiction of how uneven, “forgetful” urban planning, the precariousness of the labour market, and the physical and temporal distances that manifest from these processes can have real impact on reproduction and reproductive dilemmas. They negotiate with their globalising circumstances—

the threats of relocation and repeated displacement, of their “eternal migrant” status, and the casual work that is available to their partners—while also mediating with their own faith and reproductive decisions. With these overlapping factors, they also mediate between *mahirap* and *masipag*—of dealing with what is difficult or hard, and practicing different levels of self-discipline in sex and family planning.

Undoubtedly, a discussion on reproductive health legislation in the Philippines cannot be complete without a consideration of the Church and Catholic faith. The powerful institution, represented by the CBCP and supported by the large number of pro-life communities, has been fighting the “threats” that the RH Law poses to the moral fabric of the state. The RH debate has spanned over a decade, and the topic of reproduction has positioned groups, organisations, and individuals against each other at both the community and state levels. But beyond the debate, its dichotomous nature and the polarising rhetoric that was employed to appeal to the masses (e.g. the “Team *Buhay*” versus “Team *Patay*” campaign), are personal views and experiences of reproduction that cannot be simplified by the same “either/or” framework. I argue that these personal views and experiences cannot be studied alone in the Philippine context; and that it is also necessary to look at how the global—in this case, economic development policies, its after-effects and its processes—plays an important role in how these views are shaped and affected. The global and how it functions alongside markets, urban development, the sending and receiving of remittances, is present in everyday life in Metro Manila and in Imus. It creates social dynamics through the physical absences of OFWs, and propels relocation and migration. It is ubiquitous and is manifested in intimate life, in the daily dramas revealed in *kuwentuhan*, in the spats between partners, and in everyday engagements with the city. In re-visiting my field data, notes, and recordings and by *remembering*, I have not been able to escape the details of the

global, and how even the most intimate details of reproduction, sex, and intimacy are enmeshed in it, in what was *already there*.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

There will always be more to know, more to research and more narratives to listen to. The ethnographic notes collected for this thesis can definitely incorporate more experiences to provide deeper understandings of the intersecting factors of gender expectations and the effects of the global. It can span other parts of the city, and include more interviews, exchanges, or notes from *kuwentuhan*. As well, additional data collection could provide more insight into how the “intimate economies” of the Philippines work to create such heavily affected experiences concerning family planning and reproductive decisions.

Methodologically, some factors proved beneficial in obtaining ethnographic insight into intimacy and reproduction while in the field. Being with relatives in Cavite for instance, provided me opportunities to fit into the dynamics of the compound in Imus. It facilitated my access to the same spaces that the women convened in to perform their domestic chores, where I became exposed to their stories about intimacies, tensions, family dramas, and reproductive dilemmas. Maria’s role as a community leader gave me access to discussions with her female peers in her informal settlement. These women welcomed me and warmly generated a session of *kuwentuhan* that revealed details about their personal decisions on reproduction and the rapidly changing setting in which they reside. With other individuals in Manila, Marikina, and Quezon City, I was able to utilise my existing personal contacts and meet individuals who worked in faith-based and activist organisations, parishes, universities, and healthcare institutions. The locals who I spoke with during my ethnographic fieldwork and others who I conducted semi-

structured interviews with included both males and females, single and married individuals, and came from and worked in different parts of the city. While the speakers in this research are diverse in terms of demographics, I was still able to locate recurring key themes and sentiments during the data analysis stage.

Ultimately, however, certain viewpoints were challenging to obtain during fieldwork, due to certain class and gender dynamics. Particularly, it was difficult for me to gather insights from *poor Filipino men* in heterosexual partnerships. The men who *did* participate in my research belonged to a higher economic bracket—most were academics, religious leaders, and healthcare professionals. They were also well versed and familiar with the RH debate, and able to articulate their opinions on reproductive politics since they have had time to process, write about, or argue for (or against) the issue with their own peers or within their organisations. Fr. John for example, provides a narrative that displays his own thought process and *dilemma* about reproduction—how he does not disagree with individuals who practice modern methods of family planning but simultaneously cannot be entirely vocal about his opinions due to his position in his parish. Charles, the theology instructor who criticised *machismo* in Filipino families and culture, had again, spent years working with poor communities and sex workers, and can delineate the different reasons why public access to reproductive health is so important in the city.

Perhaps of how I am of a different class and gender, several of my peers advised me to not freely speak to men alone in these rural and/or suburban areas. I was therefore prevented from initiating conversations with individuals of this demographic. Some peers considered this culturally “inappropriate”, or generally unsafe, especially since (as Charles argues in Chapter 3) the culture of “machismo” is still present in mundane life in many parts of the city. Even during

my time in the compound in Cavite, obtaining a one-on-one, in-depth conversation with the men who spent their leisure time drinking, gambling, and bonding as a *barkada* was implausible. Instead, the stories *about* the men were obtained through conversations with the women themselves—my mother and grandmother, Karen, Angeline, Elena, and Carol. Similar to my *kuwentuhan* with the women in the informal settlement in Quezon City, the men were talked *about* rather than spoken to directly.

In this particular case, Maria specifically mentioned to me how difficult it was to have the men in the community express their own concerns or personal struggles in regard to unemployment, poverty, and the daily stresses of “putting food on the table”. During one of our more stern conversations together in our volunteer office, Maria revealed that in the last year, three men from her community committed suicide due to depression, and from the immense *hiya* (or shame) of not being able to financially provide for their families. “*Mahirap kase para sa mga lalaki na pagusapan ang mga ganyang bagay*” or (“It’s hard for men to talk about those kinds of things”), she tells me.

I was able however, to talk to our family friend, Boy, on several occasions since he offered to drive me around the city for a fee. Trusting this arrangement, I took him up on his offer several times, and was able to converse with him on a deeper level, including about my own research on reproductive dilemmas. With five children of his own, and without a steady job to support them all, I asked him about his views on the RH Law. “*Kailangan talaga*” or “We really need it”, he says to me, before delving into his own dark experiences of hearing about illegal abortions and abandoned babies in his community. “*Minsan, iniwan nga nila mga anak nila sa basurahan*” (“Sometimes, they leave their babies in the garbage bins”) he tells me, nearly without expressing emotion. His matter-of-fact tone only conveyed his familiarity with the

issue, as if he had heard of similar stories too many times. Such shocking and dire accounts, it seems, are far too common to those who live in the margins. I did not pry for more details, unsure whether doing so would be too invasive.

This piece of insight that he shared with me is something that stayed with me, a small view into the darker realities that poor Filipinos are faced with because of the lack of reproductive services; a glimmer into the ugly and tragic part of reproductive dilemmas. But, it was a brief conversation, and although I wanted to know more, Boy mentioned nothing else about the issue. He changed the subject as he always does, and we returned to conversation about the traffic, a topic that we could both comment on during my rides to the different parts of the city. Our exchanges were usually this sanitised, and they confirmed Maria's own attestation about (poor) men not being accustomed to talking about such sensitive topics.

The number of female scholars who have interviewed or conducted qualitative research with poor Filipino men on sensitive topics such as sexual or marital intimacy, relationships, and reproduction, is still scarce. Sallie Yea (2015) also directs us to this research predicament in her work on "economically marginal men" who sell kidneys in Manila's black organ market (p. 124). She reflects on the importance of building trust with her informants in her attempt to conduct rich, in-depth interviews on such delicate issues, and recognises the role her husband played in relieving certain challenges while in the field. He is both male and Filipino, which significantly helped to shift the research dynamic between Yea and her male informants. Yea explains further:

Trust and rapport are important for disclosure of often traumatic, shameful and distressing experiences. Because my husband is Filipino and has relatives living in the

field site, his role as research assistant was pivotal in achieving trust amongst the men we interviewed.

(2015, p. 126)

Although more research can be done on the views, narratives, and reproductive dilemmas of poor Filipino men in future scholarly work, a rich body of literature on Filipino men and masculinities continues to grow, unveiling layered portraits of the intimate experiences of men in the Philippines and of those who work and live overseas. Steven McKay (2007, 2015) gives considerable attention to the experiences of Filipino men who work abroad as merchant seafarers, and to the set of discourses of masculinity and heroism that accompany global labour market demands and shape their livelihoods onboard. While he finds that such discourses “both create and reproduce the Filipino niche and propagate a particular, if somewhat contradictory, subordinate masculine narratives” (2007, p. 620), McKay also posits that these Filipino maritime workers “actively accommodate, resist and go beyond such constraints, forging their own identities to make sense of their secondary status onboard and in the labour market” (2007, p. 626).

Additionally, Johnson’s (2015) study of Foucault’s pastoral power and care amongst Filipino migrant men in Saudi Arabia subverts and enriches existing understandings of migrant masculinities. In looking at how Filipino migrant men practice a “pastoral” form of affective and protective care for their *kababayan* (compatriots) who share their same diasporic space, Johnson further “challenges those Eurocentric ways of construing gendered relations of care” (2015, p. 3). “Rather than internalize a subordinate or oppositional form of masculinity,” Johnson writes, “migrant men redraw the boundaries of the community of men who matter, and redefine the

criteria on which the most excellent form of masculinity among that group of men is to be measured in that place” (2015, p. 3).

In fact, Johnson’s work challenges my own depiction of the males from Cavite’s small compound. While the women in this compound are troubled by how their male partners or relatives contribute less to their respective households in regards to income, care, or domestic labour, the men themselves do not narrate their own personal negotiations with these tasks or obligations. And it is likely that practices and acts of masculine care and pastoral solidarity are present within the spaces and gendered temporalities of the *barkadas* in and around the compound. It is also possible to further explore how these formed *barkada* communities dictate the men's desires or non-desires to inhabit transnational spaces of migration, and also shape their reproductive choices or politics.

The intricate orations of the males' desires to stay in Cavite (e.g. Tomas and Aldo), their hesitancies to depart for overseas work (e.g. Vhon), and their own reproductive dilemmas are unfortunately, not accounted for. But, we must nonetheless be reminded that the depiction of poorer or economically “marginal” men in this work remains only partially drawn out, and mostly overpowered by the more complex narratives of the women whom I spent time with in the field and developed deeper relationships with. And that, despite this drawback, the critical and important scholarship of others such as McKay, Johnson and Yea (as well as Pingol 2001), can recompense for the incomplete portrait of poorer Filipino men that I have fashioned in this project.

What I also do not delve deeper into in this research are the moments and spaces that I occupied and obtained during my time in Quezon City. These moments are equally important and propel me to think of how to extend my analysis, and how these experiences and vibrant

memories create meaning and allow for more critical investigation of family planning. As much as religiosity and the issue of reproductive health (and the globalising backdrop of Metro Manila and Imus) are raised and discussed by the individuals whom I interviewed for this research, there is an existing way of life in Metro Manila that seems disconnected from these discussions. Truthfully, the RH legislation was an especially important topic during this time. But during my “free time” around Metro Manila, I was also able to observe how the global, cosmopolitan spaces and commercial districts allow a sense of forgetfulness and escapism from these issues. As previously mentioned, once occupying these spaces—of the urban abundances of consumerism and comfort—it becomes easier for the *balikbayan*, the expat, the Westerner, and the upper-class local to disengage with these political issues. Discussions on reproductive politics are in so many ways exclusive to the very poor or very powerful. Those who take part in governing and law-making are articulate and fluent in the legislative language that is required to either pass or reject this bill, while those who are poor (or who work *for* the poor) can express deep concern or need for reproductive services. In other designated urban spaces of the city, the excesses of the global economy are perceived as normalcy. They are absorbed and taken in by the many who just do not share the same reproductive needs as poorer Filipinos. Instead, reproduction and the RH Law debate are a side thought for those whose daily lives are not concerned with such topics.

Hence, rather than having reproductive *dilemmas*, the individuals who commonly move through these spaces have reproductive *non-dilemmas*. They are able to afford contraceptives and have already abandoned religiosity as it is practiced by the pious. They move in spaces designed to entertain and release—of the colourful nightclubs in Cubao and The Fort, and practice their consumerist desires in the postmodern enclaves of Greenhills Shopping Centre. I

accompanied my friends in Manila to these locales, when I myself was not conducting interviews during the day or spending time in Cavite, Marikina, or at the feminist NGO in Quezon City. It still fascinates me how varied my days and nights were, depending on who I was accompanied by. Certainly, spending time with Maria in Quezon City provided different insights to people's lives and their experiences in the city. But in separate moments with upper-class *kaibigan*, political concern dissipated and our activities comprised sharing drinks and heading to late-night spots for karaoke or live music. When my friends inquired about my fieldwork *objectives* and the topic of my PhD research, I explained to them that I wanted to know more about views on reproductive health in the country. When I asked them about their own opinions or experiences with the issue, my friend Franco replied to me, "I feel most people don't really care that much, I mean, at least in my demographic". "It never comes up with you and your friends?" I asked again, prompting him to clarify his response. He replied nonchalantly, "We never really talk about serious shit".⁶⁶

Thus, although I attempted here to show how the larger processes of global economic development and gender dynamics work together to create textured and complicated reproductive dilemmas, I have not critically stretched out or dissected the *non-dilemmas* that exist in the middle to upper-class spaces of Manila - social circles which I found myself inhabiting. In ways, parts of Metro Manila have indeed achieved some of the attributes of the *global city*. The commercial and consumerist hub of Taguig, Bonifacio Global City, is even referred to by these middle and upper-class locals as either The Fort or simply, "Global". Interestingly, the *global* is repeatedly enunciated and referred to, as a physical space to visit but also a way of life that is visually and viscerally different to its contrasted edges—of the nearby

⁶⁶ Field notes (handwritten), 6 April 2013.

peripheries where poverty and precariousness loom. The select population of upper-class locals and *balikbayans* are able to find pleasure and move through these spaces without having to negotiate the same things that my interlocutors do. They are largely exempt from the conflicting gender expectations prescribed by social discourse and religious teachings, and seem unbothered by the unevenness of the country's economic policies. Rather, their existing circumstances have made them conducive to appreciating the cultural, commercial, and social aspects of the globalised city. Their economic, social, and class privileges also allow them to access reproductive services without any lingering affectations or afterthoughts; their "modern" attitudes about sexuality and religion separate them from the many whose lives are impacted by these same factors.

As Metro Manila and Cavite are so contradictory in several ways, this is truly one of them. The political intensity, the religious identity, and the concern for material poverty are diminished in certain areas, and within certain socio-economic groups such as Franco's own "demographic". But these case studies and narratives should not be viewed as representative of all of Metro Manila or its outside provinces. Rather, they should be viewed as part of Metro Manila's many contradictions and pluralisms. The ways in which gender dynamics (which are less "conservative" as Franco says) and how the tangible products of the globalised Philippine economy actually maintain a sense of political disaffection among the middle and upper-class locals in Metro Manila are also worth studying in future research projects. How are these disaffections and disengagements sustained and how do gender and globalised settings create disinterest from the impoverished outskirts and "forgotten" places of the city?

Another limitation in this research resides in my own critical approach and methodology in studying globalised intimacies. While I utilise a theoretical framework concerned with

feminist analysis and methodology, I also acknowledge that by featuring the topic of *reproduction*, I prioritise the heterosexual relationships being affected by gender dynamics and global economic development as a result. The field encompasses multiple interactions with gay men and women whom I befriended and spent time with in the spaces of “Global”, Makati, or other urban parts of Metro Manila that indicate *modern* consumerist and business lifestyles. Without delving too much into the socio-cultural and class experiences of gay locals in Metro Manila (see Benedicto 2014), I do recognise that the queer communities and their intimate practices in the city also complicate reproductive politics and dilemmas in this context. There was opportunity, while in the region, to further destabilise discourses of heteronormativity and heterosexuality that are automatically embedded in the same power systems that complicate reproductive policies in the country. Cupples (2002) also argues this in her reflection of her feminist methodological approaches while in Nicaragua: “The fieldwork period provides a unique setting in which heterosexual researchers can examine heterosexuality, an exercise which could potentially lead to its destabilization” (p. 384).

To elaborate, conservative discourses on reproduction as propounded by the Church (and by extension, the 1987 Philippine Constitution) only recognise heterosexual partnerships and families and heteronormative intimacies. But, the fact that the constitution legitimately defines the Filipino family as being headed by heterosexual partners, only further establishes the family as an *imagined* social unit in the face of Filipino realities. My experiences and conversations with self-identified gay men and women in the region do therefore warrant further analysis. It is a collection of rich data that is important to re-visit, but is also not forgotten. These narratives are able to further “queer” the issue of reproduction and unsettle the ways that discourses of heteronormativity function in tandem with other institutional powers to repress reproductive

rights. They can further convey how intimacies and sexuality are “disciplined by social institutions and practices that normalise and naturalise heterosexuality and heterosexual practices” (Manalansan 2006, p. 225). But for now, these critical explorations remain exterior to the scope of my thesis.

Looking Ahead with Reproductive Dilemmas and “Intimate Economies”

The value in using the analytical frameworks of the “intimate” (Pratt and Rosner 2012; Wilson 2012) and “intimate economies” (Wilson 2004), is that they both allow us to reject the notion that the workings of the global are separate from personal and everyday living. The processes of the global economy, including its neoliberal rationale and its material after-effects have penetrated mundane life in the Philippines in both recognisable and subtle ways. By breaking down the divisions between the global and the intimate in this research, I have attempted to convey how the fluidity between these terrains continues to produce globalised intimacies and ultimately, reproductive dilemmas. This project at large intends to continue the feminist and queer project of destabilising such binaries and to recognise how such rigid divisions only perpetuate power dynamics already being imposed by state and institutional actors.

The foregrounding of the narratives in this project as *dilemmas* intends to achieve the same feminist objective. In this particular context where global economic processes continue to change intimate landscapes and where conservative religious powers try to maintain them, individuals contend with more than institutional and discursive factors in regards to reproduction. On an everyday basis, they are interacting with the products of the global and

grappling with reproductive decisions and its politics along the way. And they do so alongside prescriptions of gender roles and expectations.

Finally, a critical exploration of these dilemmas in the spaces of Metro Manila and Cavite at the particular juncture when the RH Law had been recently passed also brings personal stories and views on reproduction to the fore. This again was a time when the dichotomous religious and political discourses on the topic had drowned out the ambiguities and discontinuities entrenched in reproductive dilemmas. The politics of “anti” and “pro” campaigns as well as of “*buhay*” (“life”) and “*patay*” (“death”) campaigns were at a fervent peak during my stay in the region. But experiences, views, and decision-making processes surrounding reproduction are never static, dichotomous, or fully resolved. They are in constant motion and encompass uncertainty and ambiguity. They are irrational at times, governed by affect.

The workings of the global and the ardent debates on reproduction in the Philippines do not intend to slow down, or to dissipate quietly. But continuing this research can compel us to further destabilise and pick apart the untidy connections that pertain between the local and the global as feminists have done with the “personal” and “political”. It can also inspire us to locate how intimacies form and are formed by the mechanisms of the global. Moreover, there is promise in investigating reproductive dilemmas and globalised intimacies because, by doing so, it becomes possible to observe how individuals resist or mediate with the structures and processes that profoundly impact their everyday lives.

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